















# THE HOUSE OF ROSS

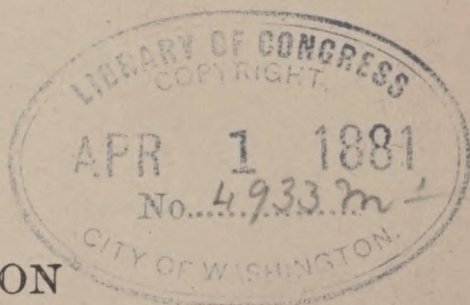
AND

## OTHER TALES

BY

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AUTHOR OF "BART RIDGELEY," "THE PORTRAIT," ETC.



BOSTON  
HALL AND WHITING, PUBLISHERS

32 BROMFIELD STREET

1881

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

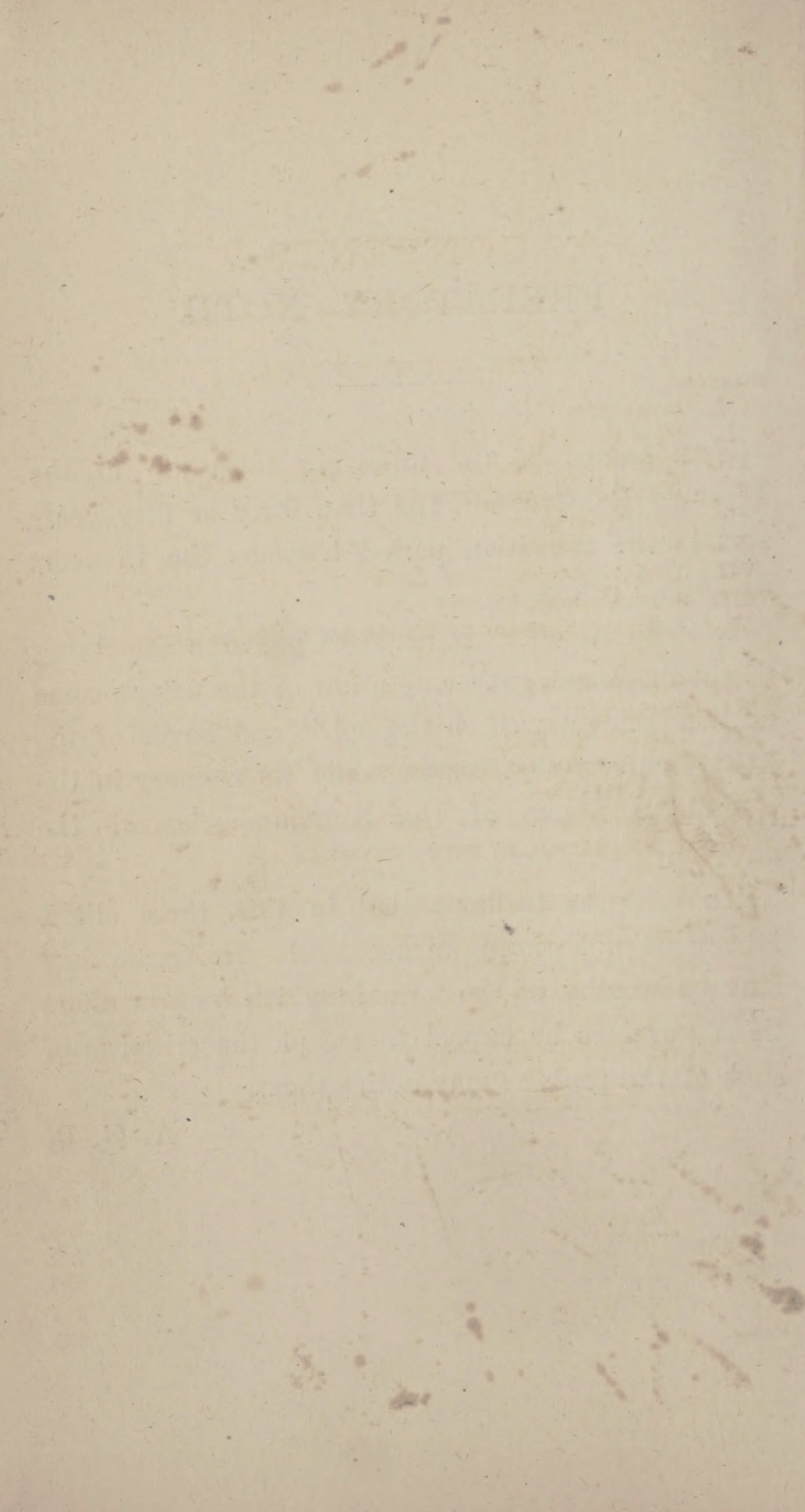
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THE scenes of the following tales are in the Western Reserve, and the time forty or fifty years ago, in the transition period between the Pioneers and the Present.

In them an effort is made to preserve something of the freshness, gather up a few of the names, some of the incidents, catch the spirit and flavor of the life which has past, leaving only its memory in the cherishing hearts of the contemporaries of the author.

He ventures to hope that in this, these slight labors are not wholly unsuccessful. He trusts they may be worthy of the form in which he now offers them, nor does he expect to escape the criticism of such of the press as may notice them.

A. G. R.





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# THE HOUSE OF ROSS.

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IN FOURTEEN CHAPTERS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### ROSSVILLE.

Few of the younger generation ever heard the name of Rossville. These few must have had their birth in its neighborhood or have heard of it from their elders. Its name cannot now be found on any of the later county or even township maps. It once had two hotels, — taverns they used to be called, when old-fashioned English was the style for names ; three or four stores at one time, many mechanic shops, a post-office, drug-store, and many pleasant dwelling-houses. The river then ran full banked, more than full sometimes ; and flourishing mills and other machinery gave importance to the place. It was not merely a point, it was an actual centre, — became such almost from the first, — for a circle of three or four townships. Its place can still be found. Two or three gray-haired persons who linger in the neighborhood may be able to point out the sites of the more important buildings, mills, and stores of its prosperous days of forty years ago.

One familiar with it then can still trace the course of the diminished river near which it was planted. There is the creek which emptied into it just above, and the fine



spring brook which used to run through the village. If one was to inquire for the Ross Tavern, — later the Ross Hotel, and last the Ross House, the early homestead of the Rosses, — he would be pointed to a pleasant residence nearly hidden by trees, on the higher ground, back from the present highway, and will wonder to find it so low and small. There, too, is still the Barber residence not far from it. No one could show him a vestige of the Eagle, the ostentatious rival of the Ross. The foundations of the old Marks store, once famous, might still be found. In the decay of the place it was burnt; and there was a scandal about the insurance, which somehow consecrated the ruins to perpetuity. This was after Marks went to the city.

The Methodist meeting-house disappeared long ago, with the shops and most of the former dwelling-houses. The large and beautiful spring is now monopolized by a cheese-factory. One abutment of a bridge shows where the river was formerly crossed, just above where the modern iron structure spans the narrow, shallow current now. Crossing, and gaining the high ground beyond, we turn, and wonder what has become of the once noisy, thriving little town, the echo of whose hammers and traffic we fancied was still in our ears. The roofs of three or four tasteful farm-houses, with their outbuildings, rise amid the ripening foliage of embowering trees. The small spire of a neat brick chapel points up a little below where the town was, and the white walls of a solitary schoolhouse are all that meets the eye. Improved roads and the draft of the rising city drew off its capital and energy. Then came the railroad and finished it, as it did so many towns.

John Ross took possession of that region near seventy years ago. He purchased a large body of land; had a family of four boys and five girls, — the eldest then quite



of age. Other families came with or soon followed him. Strong, resolute, active, intent on becoming rich, with considerable ready means, he soon made a decided opening in the woods. He happened to be on an important thoroughfare for that day, which soon made his place accessible. As his sons became of age, they married off to the thrifty daughters of other pioneers, and lost no time in beginning for themselves in the same neighborhood. The daughters, too, made early and what were thought to be fortunate marriages, had homes in the same vicinity, and Rossville, without forethought in that direction, sprang up into a place of itself, — got the start and became a little centre.

John Ross, with little cultivation, but strong New-England sense and shrewdness, in a narrow circle of money-making, was a man of good person, pleasant manners, and kindly in his family. He had no extensive notions or plans, but was sharp and grasping within his limited reach. The older sons were like him: every thing prospered in their hands. They all rooted money out of the ground, as was said of them. The father began “fore-handed” and grew rich. The sons and sons-in-law prospered, and followed after. These sons and daughters were a well-looking, handsome race after their type, neat, tidy, and cared well for their persons, houses, and dress; and while the elder Ross had on several occasions taken cruel advantage of unfortunate people, and purchased property which they were obliged to part with at ruinous rates, they, on the whole, were well liked. With the thrift which governed their lives, most of the older members of the family, after having this world well in hand, joined the church; thus securely investing in the future, with, however, no loss of present advantages. Mrs. Ross, the mother, was in some respects a superior woman, of whom little was



ever said. After the birth of her youngest child, between whom and the next elder several years intervened, she died.

The Waynes, from the same New-England neighborhood, came into the country a few years later than the Rosses, and built their homestead some three miles distant, yet within the same township. The elder Wayne was a younger man and of a different type from John Ross. Cultivated, of fine person and manners, large-hearted and liberal, he was very popular in the new community. He was enterprising, purchased land extensively, made considerable improvement, and was taken off a few months after the death of Mrs. Ross. Mrs. Wayne, quite a remarkable woman, was left with a large family of boys, and her affairs were badly embarrassed. Sickness of the children added to her distress, nor had she a relative or friend able to give her needed assistance. Tenderly reared, idolized by a devoted husband, like so many brave and noble women, she found resources in the hitherto unknown energies of her own well-endowed nature. There had never been much cordiality between the Rosses and Waynes. There was something, just the flavor or echo of a down-East difference between them, of which neither side spoke, and of which no one outside of the two families knew. Upon the death of Mr. Wayne, Mr. Ross came forward in a very kind and considerate way, as was said at the time, and rendered some very useful services to the widow in the management of her affairs. Though the mother of a large family, she was still a handsome woman of thirty seven or eight. So attentive became Mr. Ross that his children were uneasy, and there were neighborhood rumors, when the poor widow was thunderstruck by an offer of marriage. She could not accept. She did her best, in her surprise and dismay, to make her decided



rejection as little ungracious as possible. It was of no use. There was something hard and cruel in the narrow Ross nature, and the poor woman and her children were never forgiven. The younger Rosses, who would have torn her to pieces had she accepted, were unanimous in a declaration of war because she refused their father. It became necessary to sell off quite all the land and most of the personal effects of the estate. The times were depressed, property was low, there was no money seeking such investment; and at the sale the younger Rosses appeared, and bid off for the rejected suitor all the valuable property at ruinous prices. There was alleged collusion with the administrator, a lawsuit and scandal; but the sale was not set aside, and so the offence for the present was compensated. The widow barely retained the homestead. She was firm and resolute; the elder boys, approaching manhood, were brave and determined. The struggle for existence for two or three years was hard and obstinate, but they fought it through.

The country had then become much more populous than it is now, and these matters were widely talked about. The Waynes lived through it all. The family were very popular. The Rosses prospered in their way, grew rich, and Rossville became a busy, flourishing little burg.

Among the later comers into that region were the Warners, well to do, who, from the first enjoyed a good deal of consideration. The daughters of their house, quite accomplished young ladies, were esteemed among the best, and were of the most sought after of that time. The elder of the young Waynes, Forrester, made their acquaintance, and soon became attached to Sarah, the second. He was a fine, manly youth, proud and sensitive, and the peer of any young man in the county; indeed, among his acquaintances he was thought to be quite the



first. Between him and Sarah came about a very strong mutual attachment, entirely satisfactory to the friends on both sides. It ran along for some time, — three or four years. The young man had his own way to make, and his mother and younger brothers to help forward. He and Sarah were still young; and, though her father would have been very willing to help them, there seemed no need of hurry. Whether they were formally engaged was not known; but everybody regarded them as pledged to each other, as did they, till trouble came.

In this condition of their affairs, John Ross, jun., returned from the East. He was about the age of Forrester Wayne, between whom and himself there had always been a personal dislike, doubtless arising in the family feud. He had the good looks and faults of his race well marked. He went away with a reputation for irregularities, was gone two or three years, and came back with many of the points of an arrogant coxcomb. He was at once taken with Sarah; and in the bravery of his Eastern-made clothes, his stylish horses and carriage, he made advances to her quite directly. Just what happened between the parties was not generally known. Sarah must have given him some encouragement; for a quarrel ensued between her and her lover, who soon after went away to Michigan, the then West. It was said that this was never made up, although Sarah refused all attentions from John Ross as was thought. Young Wayne never returned to her, and John succeeded in approaching her again; and finally he bore her, a pale, sad bride, as was said, to his own house on the hill across the river from Rossville. This was accepted by the Rosses as quite a triumph, and cancelled the indignity put upon them by the rejection of John Ross, sen., by Forrester Wayne's mother six or seven years before. Time ran on: strangers came to Rossville and



helped to build it up. The elder Ross was drinking badly, as was said. The bride on the hill became a pale, sad-eyed wife; and other incidents in the currents of other lives came to be talked of, as the face of the country rapidly changed, growing beautiful with years.

The youngest of the Ross family was a daughter, who became the care of one of her eldest sisters, Mrs. Barber, who reared her with care. They called her Portia. She had something better than the typical beauty of her sisters, with qualities in full measure, the germs of which were scarcely known, even in the favored members of her house. She early evinced decided literary tastes and a turn for intellectual pursuits, phenomenal in her family. Of Portia I have a little story to tell, for which this sketch of the Ross history may serve as a background and proem.

There was also a younger Wayne, fourth or fifth of that family, whose mother called him Charles.

Portia had never heard of her father's rejection by Charles's mother, nor the speculation in the Wayne lands, nor the story of the wooing of her sad-eyed sister-in-law.



## CHAPTER II.

## HOW IT BEGAN.

It was at the old academy, the first school of its kind in the oldest and most aristocratic town of the Western Reserve, where they met, and many miles from Bridgefield, in the limits of which Rossville was situate. It was Portia's last term. She had always been homesick in Warren, pleasant as the town was, and delightfully as she was situated for a schoolgirl. That first academy was quite a grand institution, established in the primitive times, when, in the prevailing innocence, young ladies and gentlemen were educated together in the same classes, without possible thought of impropriety or the consequences of it, and none but young ladies and gentlemen were received there. Though of many years' standing, Warren was still proud of it; and the best of the old houses of the town were open to the students from other places, who found homes in them. While at school Portia was one of the family of the Edwardses, with the privileges of a daughter of the house. The term had commenced two or three days before her arrival; and on the first of her appearance in school, she found the young ladies in a mild excitement over the new assistant. Such a dear! Such loves of eyes and whiskers! Such beautiful hair! So handsome and so graceful! She saw him first in the recitation-room. Certainly there was much in the frank-browed, open-eyed youth, with his pleasant manner, to excuse, possibly to justify, the enthusiasm of the young ladies.



“Mr. Coe was just as good — just as good as he could be,” said Miss Wilson, referring to his clerical predecessor, who died during the summer vacation.

“Altogether too good for this lower world,” added Miss Winter; “and it is not for us poor girls to murmur at the ways of Providence.”

“No, I should think not. Let us be resigned,” added Miss Davis. “Look out, Portia, that you don’t lose your heart to him.”

“I feel quite safe,” said the unmoved girl.

This was on their way up stairs. As they entered the room, where five or six young gentlemen had preceded them, a young man, not as old as some of the students, standing a little apart, turned, and there was almost an exclamation from Portia, as she paused in surprise.

“It is Charles Wayne! They live near us — always have,” she said.

And there were little suppressed exclamations from her companions. The young man bowed to the young ladies, looked an instant at Portia, and, seeing that he was recognized, he advanced and gave her his hand very cordially. The class was seated, and the exercise begun in which the young man soon lost himself. He had a quick, eloquent way of flashing up with the classes which at once inspired and quite lit up the minds of his pupils. Portia had not mastered the lesson, and in a very arch, shy way, admitted her deficiency and was excused. She never thought of what the girls said of him, nor yet that he was handsome, nor did she pay much attention to his glowing explanations. He was from her home — was a part of it, and must love all the dear, homely, rude, and common things about it. No, they were not common nor rude. Homely they were, for that was of home. And so this was Charles Wayne. She had not seen him for six or seven



years. She wondered where he had been all this time. He was a clerk in the store and post-office at Rossville one winter, and she a little miss; and she thought him the handsomest and most gallant youth she had ever seen, the swiftest skater on the river. She remembered he was quite a hunter, and became a favorite with her father, who still had a weakness for deer-stalking. Something happened in the big swamp between them about a deer, which Charles permitted the blind old man, once quite a hunter, to think he had helped to slay, and divided it with him. She thought it was good of Charles, and smiled to think this should come to her now. She was very glad to meet him, and glad he was a teacher. The time would be all the more pleasant and short, and she was glad the young ladies admired him. It was something for her to be proud of. When the class was dismissed he joined her and went down the stairs, and made some pleasant inquiries about Rossville and the things of Bridgefield. And, as they were old acquaintances, nothing strange was thought of it by her friends and classmates. She came soon to know why he was there. Warren then had a very famous physician, under whose care he was pursuing his medical studies; and, as he had to make his way, he became an assistant teacher in the academy. He was well known in the town, and very popular. He had charge of all her classes, and found her the most docile, arch, coy, and appreciative of all the pupils he had ever seen or heard of; slender, sylph-like, supple and perfect in her figure, of just the average height, a brunette, with wide, gray eyes, her face rich in ever-varying color, and a profusion of dark hair, so accustomed to her own beauty and grace that they seemed nothing worth to her. Teacher as he was, he soon found himself taking from her eyes, her low pleasant voice, lessons in that older, deeper, higher lore, wherein



the wisest are often gladdest learners of the simplest and tenderest. Accustomed to the society of the refined of the sex, knowing and appreciating their ways, easily making himself acceptable, he was at this time a stranger to the deeper emotions of passion and love ; and, like many a superiorly endowed man, he is destined to thread their mazes as unseeing and unknowing, as uncertain and doubting, as the blindest and stupidest of his sex. Plenty of boy and young-man's fancies had been his ; but nothing ever came to him like the light from these wide, shy eyes, as their flashes from the long, dark fringed margins came up to him. He was not one of those men who come to be in love, as it is called, without knowing it. What though their families had been at feud, he was not one to nurse old grudges. Was there any fault in her ? Plenty, doubtless ; though he smiled incredulously at the idea. She certainly was not to blame for the narrowness and grudging spite of her elders, and he knew his mother cherished no feeling of enmity against any of the race. Old John was abused and broken with whom he used to joke about that deer. He certainly had no grudge toward John Ross the younger. If he won his wife from his brother, he was certain that could be no cause of offence. She could hardly have been worth a struggle, or his brother would not have relinquished her so easily. All that was in the, to him, long ago ; and he made no effort to dispel the new atmosphere of light, color, fragrance, and romance that surrounded him, and which, to the eyes of two or three others, enveloped them both. To her classmates and usual companions, they were old friends, with the things in common of living all their lives in the same neighborhood. He was much in her society ; so he was with the rest. He read to her at Mrs. Edwards's, and came and went with the freedom of a favored visitor of the house. They saw



nothing in it: Mrs. Edwards saw it all, and to her eyes the charm encircled them both. The coming and going of the warm color in the maiden's varying cheek, in his presence, the down-drooping lids, under which eyes threw their arch glances from the margins, with the furtive upward flashes at the animated manly face turned downward to her, seemed to warrant this. First love, and more sweet and delicious for being unspoken. "They are a beautiful pair, and will make a lovely couple," she said to a friend, as the two stood a little remote from them by a window.

Anxious she was — just a little. Portia seemed younger than her years, and the most innocent, transparent, and unconscious of little maidens.

"Mr. Wayne," she said to him one day, when this thing had run on toward the end of the autumn, "you admire Miss Ross very, very much, don't you?"

"Very, very much," he answered warmly, "only that is not just the word, Mrs. Edwards."

"You won't forget that I am not her mother, that she is away from her friends?"

"And that I am her teacher," he answered, laughing. "Mrs. Edwards, my perfect respect for her is as deep as my admiration. I shall be more jealous of her good name than the most exacting brother she has, or ever had."

For him, through these weeks, who was so drawn to her, in the charm with which thought and reflection as yet had no place, it was the most natural thing in the world to unconsciously feel that she also was surrounded with it. He said nothing, asked no questions even of himself. The world was young, fragrant, and glorious. He permitted its warmth and radiance to flood and saturate heart and soul. The future must care for itself.

The term came very suddenly to an end, as it seemed



to Charles ; and for once Portia was in no hurry to go home. Her youngest brother had that autumn returned from down East, and brought with him a bride fresh from the old home. They came on to Warren during the closing days of the school, where were relatives of hers, and carried Portia back to Rossville. Young Wayne left about the same time. They met him there, and liked him. Mrs. Edwards did not part with Portia till she had told her the words of that young man with her woman's gloss. Her answer was a flood of color, almost closed eyes, in which the kind woman fancied she saw the light of a maiden's spirit, that first finds itself bathed in the brightness and warmth of a man's love. She thought it also her duty to say something to pretty Mrs. Ross on the same general subject, who was in a frame of mind to appreciate her communication. When the young wife spoke to Portia about it, the girl merely laughed a musical heart-whole girl's laugh, with increased color to be sure. "Oh!" she said, "that is some of Mrs. Edwards's fancies."

"Well, I don't know about that: I think from what I saw that it was one of Mr. Wayne's facts," was the decided reply ; and then they both laughed.

"Mrs. Edwards thought it was worth telling me, and I presume she thought I would tell it when I got back to Rossville," she said at length.

"Yes, that would be the most natural thing in the world. But Bessie, dear, do you just show yourself the most wonderful woman of the age, and don't say a word about it, and be a blessed Bess."

"Have you any reason for not wishing it spoken of? Most girls would be proud and happy of such a thing."

"Well, Bessie, you are in a queerish family. We will let Mr. Wayne tell this himself in Rossville, if it is true,



and he wants it known there. Don't you think that is best?"

"What a wise little woman you are!" rejoined Bessie, and then they laughed again.



## CHAPTER III.

## PORTIA MISTRESS OF THE SITUATION.

SOMEBODY told something very promptly on the return of Portia to Rossville. It was by the man of the party. Mrs. Ross did not tell of it there, though of course she told it to her husband Robert. Now, he liked Charles Wayne well enough, and had no objections to it, if it came about in an orthodox way. On the night of his return home he merely said to his elder sisters, Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Barber, that they "had better look out for Portia. She was dead in love with Charles Wayne, who was to keep the winter school at Rossville." Here was a great to do! There was a grand council in the afternoon of the next day, at Mrs. Barber's, between the two ladies, at which Mrs. Harry Ross, wife of the eldest brother, assisted, — a dear, good, quiet, elderly lady, who rather liked the Waynes. She knew little of Charles, though she had pleasant recollections of him.

"What is it all about?" she asked unconcernedly, as she came in.

"All about this young Charles Wayne and Portia," said Mrs. Gray sharply. "I should think that was enough."

"Why, he is going to keep our school, and Theodore (her eldest) said he was glad of it," she answered.

"I'll warrant it, that is a part of the plan," said the vexed Mrs. Gray. "How came that about, I wonder, Laura?"



“ Well, it seems that Mr. Marks, with his high, down-East notions, wrote to Mr. Waters, principal of the Warren Academy, for the best young-man teacher known to him, and he recommended this Charles Wayne, and Marks hired him at an awful price ; and Portia declares she shall go to the school,” at which both the others held up their hands.

“ Well, what is it about Charles and Portia, anyway? ” asked Mrs. Ross.

“ Enough, I should think,” said Mrs. Gray.

“ What does she say about it? ”

“ She only laughs,” replied Mrs. Barber.

“ It must be bad,” replied the unconcerned Mrs. Ross.

“ Dorcas, you never were with us in these family matters,” said Mrs. Gray to her sister-in-law.

At this moment Portia came clipping into the room. “ O aunt Dorcas ! ” and flying to the placid little dame, she threw her arms about her neck and kissed her with warmth.

Portia had two nephews older than herself, and three or four nieces of quite her age ; and save Mrs. Barber, Robert, and Mrs. John Ross on the hill, she called her brothers and sisters uncles and aunts.

“ Tell me what this fuss is all about? ” asked aunt Dorcas of her, a little gravely.

“ All what fuss, aunt? ” with a little gleam from her eyes.

“ You know well enough,” said Laura Barber.

“ What is it? ” asked the girl, turning to aunt Gray.

“ This about you and this Charles Wayne — of all fellers.”

“ He is not a ‘ feller,’ aunt, and you shall not call him one,” with gay spirit.

“ They say Charles is in love with her, and she don’t deny it,” said aunt Gray.



“I only hope he is,” said the girl with a laugh and coloring.

“And that she is just” —

A threatening finger from the young girl arrested the speech of aunt Gray.

“Well, Robert said we had better take care of you, anyway. I would like to know what that does mean,” said Laura.

“That you are to be my dear sisters, aunts, and mothers, as you always have been,” said the girl very sweetly and caressingly.

“Get along! There is no doing any thing with you,” said the still irate Mrs. Gray.

“Aunt Dorcas,” said the girl, “how long is it since it was a crime for a simple little girl to be admired by a very nice young man?”

“Simple girl, nice young man, indeed!” said Mrs. Gray.

“I have heard a story that when my father and these naughty girls,” with a look at her sisters, “came into the country, a very sweet little Dorcas was brought all the way, and the day Uncle Harry was twenty-one they were married; and,” turning to Mrs. Gray, “there was a young Mr. Gray in the same company, and the day after my oldest sister was eighteen, they were married,” she said naively.

“Well, what of that?” asked Mrs. Barber.

“And as for Laura here,” turning to her, “she was married off when she was sixteen; and they were in too much of a hurry about it to be very particular about the bridegroom.” This was said in such a bright-spirited way as to provoke a laugh, in which Laura joined with the rest.

“I declare, it is too bad,” she finally said.

“So they all said, as I understand,” rejoined the viva-



cious girl. "Now, here is poor little me; I am nineteen — older than any girl of the family when she was married — and never a lover; unless this — this" — She laughed and blushed, and tossed her shining little head with saucy significance.

"And I don't understand a word of what it is all about," said the good-natured Dorcas.

"Nor I either," answered the young lady.

"Well, there is one thing," said Mrs. Barber decidedly, "I will not have him snooping and sneaking about here, I tell you."

"Nor will I," said the girl, laughing. "And, Laura, when you come to see him, you will be ashamed of that speech. He is not a snoop or a sneak. I hope he will call when you are all here."

"I should really like to see him," said aunt Dorcas.

"I don't want to," said Mrs. Gray with emphasis.

"And then he is to keep our school for four months!" added Mrs. Barber.

"Well, Laura, if he should take Warren in hand and make a good boy of him, what would you say?" asked Portia.

"I would give it all up and thank God," was the reply.

"He will find a tougher job of it with Warren than with my silly little sister," said the hard and unyielding Mrs. Gray.

"Will he, aunt Gray? Do you really think so? Now, you keep a real good watch of things; follow Rob's advice and take care of Portia, and a year or two hence you ask Mr. Wayne himself — only I am a little afraid he won't undertake the 'silly little sister,'" and then she ran out of the room with a merry laugh.

"Oh, dear! what can be done?" exclaimed the vexed Mrs. Gray.



“Well, I don’t see the need of doing any thing,” said Dorcas.

“I suppose you’d let things take their course.”

“Why not? The poor things will find trouble enough. For my part, I would smooth the way for young people.”

“Well, you’ll see.”

The door-bell was faintly heard a minute before; and then Portia came forward in a demure, arch way, attended by Charles Wayne himself. Had a small peal of thunder broke in the parlor, two of the ladies could not have been more astonished, and would have been less disconcerted.

“Ladies, permit me to present Mr. Charles Wayne,” with mischief just glimmering in her wide gray eyes. The young man went forward in a frank, unembarrassed manner quite irresistible. So surprised were they and disconcerted, that for the instant they seemed not to identify the animated, graceful youth before them with the reprobated young man of the minute before; and his presence and bearing brought them to their feet with the instinctive courtesy of the sex.

“Mrs. Barber,” extending his hand, “may I hope to be remembered?” She placed her own within his reach, and he bowed over it in a way to flatter most women. “Mrs. Gray, I can remember the first time I ever saw you; and, had I never met you since, I should recognize you as Miss Ross’s sister,” with a glance at the young lady.

Miss Ross was a very beautiful girl; and the compliment to a woman of Mrs. Gray’s age was great, though not wholly undeserved. She did not receive him graciously; but she gave him her hand, and muttered some indistinct words momentarily free from malice; and then he turned to good Dorcas Ross, who received him with the cordiality he deserved.



“My mother specially enjoined me to call upon you,” he said. “She had been to see your mother, and found her very cheerful, and she thought you would be glad to hear this from her; and she knew I would be glad to deliver the message.”

Aunt Dorcas was greatly pleased at his mother’s thoughtfulness, and obliged to him, and spoke of his school.

Then he turned to Mrs. Barber again. “I did not have more than a half-permission from Miss Ross to call. I hope I have not taken an unwarranted liberty; and if you will permit me sometimes to step in, without offence, I certainly will not abuse the kindness.” This frankly spoken.

She managed to say that she expected he would call, of course, “after meeting my sister at Warren, and that they should always be glad to see him.”

He knew it cost her a great deal to say this, and was gratified accordingly.

Then he inquired for Mrs. Robert Ross. She was at John Ross’s on the hill.

“Oh, dear, I was always a little in awe of Mrs. John Ross!” and turning appealingly to Portia, “Please take your hat and go with me. It is a lovely day out, and I am sure Mrs. Barber will permit this once.” With a flash of her eyes on her two sisters, the young girl tripped away for her hat, followed by the young man.

Silence reigned for a moment after, when Mrs. Gray threw up her hands in a sort of dismayed horror.

“Oh, dear, did you ever!” she exclaimed.

“No, I never did,” was the candid response of Laura.

“Was there ever any thing like that?” demanded Mrs. Gray.

“There certainly never was,” was Laura’s frank admission.



“Here we were, ready to tear his eyes out, and in comes this little clipping witch of ours, leading him right in here! Well, he is handsome—I must say that for him—and a gentleman born,” said Mrs. Gray.

“And you shook hands with him,” said Dorcas, laughing.

“Well, what could I do?”

“Why, you did the right thing; and Laura thought his calling was just the thing, and asked him to call again,” and the little round dame actually laughed at them.

“Yes,” said Laura, “I’ve made his ‘calling and election sure,’ as the preachers say, I fear; but what could I do? Of course he will call. We can’t beat him that way,” and they relapsed to brooding silence.

“Do you suppose this was arranged between them?” asked Mrs. Gray.

“Why, she was not absent from us two minutes,” said Dorcas.

Rossville enjoyed the spectacle of the young people tripping along its one street toward the bridge and up the high bank; Portia occasionally speaking, and casting quick sidewise glances at her silent companion, who answered absently. In his reception he saw more than the girl suspected—the old causeless enmity. Did she know of that? Share it? In a way, now, she was at home. What a complete change in her between Rossville and Warren!—the coy, sweet, docile little maiden and pupil at once transformed to the assured young lady of society; and standing *aplomb* a full inch taller than when last he saw her. If she then seemed surrounded by the atmosphere of azure and gold which enveloped him, and which had vaguely admonished him that he might have to think and care for both in their relations, that impression was dispelled, and he was breathing quite common air



now, rather cool and thin. Several times in their walk he turned to her with an inquiring, curious look. She was the same, but very different; and he fancied there was playing about the ripe lips a covert smile, as if she was also conscious of the new light in which she appeared to him, and quite enjoyed it.

They had a pleasant call, and Mrs. John Ross was really very cordial to him. On their way back they met Warren Barber on the bridge. Charles stopped for a pleasant word with him. Portia almost trembled; but Warren seemed really pleased to meet the young man, and answered him very civilly in the few words they had about Godolphin, quite a famous young horse, and the only possession of young Wayne.

As they passed along — “Do you think you can do any thing with him?” asked Portia anxiously. “Will you try?”

“Certainly I will. I am sure I can get along with him.”

“How? What will you do?”

“Well, I am still a good deal of a boy,” with a laugh. “I like boys. I shall take a great fancy to Warren, and he will love me. Then I shall have no trouble.”

“Is it easy for you?” she asked, with a side-look at him.

“Easy for me — is what easy?”

“To win love.”

“A boy’s love — for a half boy; that is hardly love,” hesitatingly, in the new light of the last few weeks on the subject.

“Well, that other love — real love?” looking away. “Is that easy?”

“Is that easy to win? Oh! I am afraid not. I don’t know as that is a thing to win, struggle for, and take by might,” he said, gravely.



“How then?” asked the rosy-cheeked catechist.

“That is high and holy — like God’s love. It seems to me to be a part of his love, and, like that, given.”

“Given? Unsought, unasked?”

“It may be — for an answering love,” evasively.

“And you would have it given, not even asked for?”

“Where I loved with my whole soul, I should receive it as the most precious thing, however it might come, and still think I did not deserve it.”

“If it came to you at once, easily, you would not value it. You would not give much love for it,” naively.

“I might not.”

The young man was intensely absorbed in this conversation, while the girl put her searching questions with an air of gay *persiflage*. She greeted this answer with a merry little laugh, in which the young man, detected in the absurd solemnity of his part as it now seemed to him, cordially joined.

Finally — “And so you think it is to be laughed at?” he added.

“The whole subject — that subject. But poor Warren. If you only can do something for him this winter,” anxiously.

“Oh! I wish every thing was as easy,” he answered a little depressed.

“But you don’t like things that are easy,” with another laugh and an arch glance.

“Do you think Mrs. Barber would be glad if I should get Warren into the way of being a good boy?”

“What a question, Mr. Wayne! Nothing in this world would be good enough for you,” with some emotion.

“You will see Miss Ross,” a little coldly. She looked up wonderingly, but said nothing.

The rest of the way back to her door was passed with



few words. There he left her, and turned and walked thoughtfully away. The young girl let her eyes follow him for a few steps, and then she entered the house with a thoughtful face, which really quite became her. She may have been vaguely conscious of the threshold on which she stood. Perhaps she, too, fancied she had stepped over it. If so, she determined to turn back.



## CHAPTER IV.

## WARREN — DULL BUT USEFUL.

PORTIA's light banter of her sister Laura was not without foundation. The most attractive of all the girls except the youngest, there was a little crowd of admirers around her ere she passed childhood. Barber, a young man of substance, was the choice of her father; and while yet too young to have decided preferences, and before she was seventeen, she was married. Her life was hapless. The newly wedded pair succeeded to the elders in the hotel; and there her children were born, and all died but Warren. When he was ten years old they left it, in the vain hope of withdrawing him from the pernicious atmosphere and surroundings of the place. The elder Ross still survived, and his later years were darkened by constantly excessive drink. He divided up his large property, and the cover of the church and watchful care of his children were unequal to the concealment of his weakness. His frequent appearance on the street gravely intoxicated became too common to attract attention. This burden lay on all the family alike. Sore as it was to Mrs. Barber, it was nothing to that of her only child, Warren, now fifteen. Perverse from infancy, as was said, he rapidly developed into viciousness. Neglected in childhood, and left to the chance influences of a thronged tavern, reeking bar-room and stables, he became a nuisance before he was eight, and a terror at ten. The removal of his parents to a new and pleasant home did not change his



mode of life, or withdraw him from his old haunts and habits. At the time mentioned in the last chapter, he had become quite an outcast, without associates of any kind save hostlers and stage-drivers. He had a liking for horses, almost a passion, and showed at times a gleam of kindness toward Portia. He seldom spoke to his mother, quite disowned his father, and was rarely about their house. In early childhood he partially learned to read. It was now many years since he had been in a school. Prayers, tears, punishments, whether applied too late or improperly, were alike inefficacious. His parents and relatives now seldom mentioned his name, and his mother's only remaining hope was the chance that he might "take a turn."

On the second day after the incidents named in the last chapter, Charles Wayne wished to visit his old medical instructor, Dr. Grant, at Charter, a few miles distant, to secure books for such study as he might find time for during the winter. He went through Rossville. Godolphin, Dolphin, or Dolph, was only four years old; had been a pet and plaything a year or two before, in the young man's leisure, and taught all manner of horse-feats. The past months of idleness had rendered him very spirited, and on this morning he taxed the young man's fine skill as a rider several times very seriously. Just past the water-trough in the village, he declined to pass a wagon standing in the road; and the efforts of his master were unavailing, as were the efforts of the horse to part with his rider. Had the young man desired to attract attention to his horsemanship, he was gratified, for the performance was witnessed by quite a crowd. Among others, Warren was conspicuous, between whom and the baffled horseman several words were exchanged. "Warren," called the youth, "you must try him;" alighting at a



safe distance from the bugaboo. Warren eagerly assumed his place in the saddle, when, as Charles preceded him toward the object of his terror, Dolphin quite readily approached it. "I knew you could ride him, Warren, and I shall have to get you to tame him for me. Ride him up and down the street, and see how you like him," which the pleased boy did with great eagerness. The horse was a beauty and exhibited himself to advantage, while his owner answered numerous questions concerning him.

"Ride him up here," said the young man, who had mounted the platform in front of Marks's store, several steps from the ground. Up this the horse walked as readily as a dog would have done, to the astonishment of the spectators.

"Well, if that don't beat me!" exclaimed the delighted Warren.

"He would climb a ladder with you, Warren," said Wayne.

"I believe he would. Will he go down these steps?" he asked.

"Try him."

And Dolphin stepped down with unhesitating assurance to the renewed delight of his rider, who now dismounted to caress and admire him.

"Warren, what have you got to do to-day?" asked the young man, as if he could have any thing.

"Nothin'."

"Can you go with me over to Charter?"

"Of course I can," his face flashing up.

"Well, ride Dolph down to Brown's and put him in the stable; tell Brown we want a horse and buggy to drive to Charter. Then you go and ask you mother if you can go with me."

"All right," and the boy rode away.



“All but asking his mother,” said Marks, at which there was a general laugh.

“You get him to ask his mother, and I’ll be your grandfather,” said Henry Ross, who stood by.

“Well, I don’t care so much about your being my grandfather, but you may be my uncle,” answered the young man, laughing.

“All right,” said uncle Harry, joining in the laugh.

It was but a few rods to the hotel, and soon after Warren was seen running towards his mother’s house. Five minutes later, the boy, a little tidied up, came running to the store with, “She says I can go; and the buggy will be ready in ten minutes,” he said, quite out of breath.

The men on the platform were too amazed for speech.

“I’ll see if that is so,” said Mr. Ross, starting off to inquire of his sister. He found her still under the effect of her surprise.

“The strangest thing has just happened to me. Do you believe it, Warren positively asked me, in a civil way, if he might go with Charley Wayne to-day. What can it mean?” she said to her brother.

He, in answer, related the incident at Marks’s.

“Oh! it is his doings, is it?” she added. “Well, if he can do that on the start” —

“You can hope every thing,” said Portia. “He was even willing to put on a decent coat and collar.”

“And I am to be Charles Wayne’s uncle,” said the man, turning to Portia, with a laugh. “What do you say to that, Portia?”

“I will wait till he asks me, before I answer that, uncle Harry,” she replied gayly.

“Oh, well, by George! you could do a good deal worse,” was his rejoinder.

Warren returned that night, bubbling over with the



incidents of the day, and remained in quite all the evening, recounting them to the willing ears of Portia, while his mother sat listening in incredulous silence. "He had driven all the way, both ways, every step, and Charles had said that he was a first-rate driver, and told him all sorts of horse-stories, and he had eaten dinner at Dr. Grant's with them all, and saw a skeleton and lots of things, and they brought away some books, and he was a-going to help about the school, to take care of the school-house. He was to be the jan — jan — something." — "Janitor, perhaps," suggested Portia. "Yes, jangler or something, of the schoolhouse; and Dolph was to be kept at Brown's, and they should break him to harness in the winter." There seemed no end of things planned. For one day the poor outcast had been treated as a human being. The isolation and solitude that surrounded his young life had been dispelled, and the warmth and tenderness of sympathy shed upon him. A man's voice, a young man, bright, a half hero, had all one day been calling and speaking to him, and appealing to the dumb feelings and emotions that had never before stirred in the poor boy's bosom.

Three or four times he ended his narration, turned away, and then came back to renew it, or tell some forgotten thing, or one already recited, returned to him.

"Well, you are going to like him very much," said Portia, as Mrs. Barber left the room.

"Who? Charley Wayne?"

"Yes."

"Of course I do. Don't you?"

"You should not ask me that."

"Why?"

"Why? Oh! because — yes, I like him very well, of course, because, you see, he is going to take care of you."



“He asked me lots of things about you,” said Warren.

“Oh! he did? That was funny! What did he want to know, I wonder?”

“He thought I must like you very much and lots.”

“Oh, he did! Why, I should like to know?”

“He didn’t say.”

“What else did he say about me?”

“Oh! I can’t remember. Lots!”

“Lots! Well, no matter. I’m glad you can’t remember.”

On the following Monday morning, Warren’s new friend rode into Rossville early on Dolphin, to commence his labors, which were to be severe. The school was large; and a great many from the region around were to attend, — many young men and women of his own age. Young Mrs. Marks gave him a fine room for the present. Warren was on hand to care for the horse, had the school-room swept and a fire made, and saw the opening.

Below the outside callous with which early neglect, followed by open war, in which all the world were against him, Charles fancied he discovered in Warren a quick, warm, kindly nature, with no little native shrewdness. The boy was awfully profane, and lived at right angles with the ordinary habits of civilized life. The young merchant and his wife quite entered into the enterprise of winning the lad back, or of planting him anew in the human field where he might take root and develop the better instincts and elements of the common nature. Quite all the leisure of the young man was devoted to him for the first few weeks of the winter. He had him with him at Marks’s, where the boy came early in the morning and remained late in the evening, giving up his old haunts, and was led away from his old habits; companions and associates he had none. His mother dressed him in a neat



new suit, and Charles taught him to care for his person ; and he came to like his clothes, and was pleased with his own appearance in them. The vices of his language were a sore labyrinth of foes, and the natural warmth of his temper had ripened to chronic petulance and irritability. It was not all smooth and easy between the new friends ; and Warren ran off many times in a fit, or brooded for hours in a sulk. His mother passively and hopelessly yielded him to the experiment, — could do no otherwise. His father, with whom he had not exchanged a word for months, absorbed in sordid money-gettings, was only too glad to have him removed from the places where the boy, spectre-like, sometimes crossed his path. Portia, sweet, thoughtful, and patient, was a full and hopeful ally. He was the one thing in common between them. With her assistance Warren was easily induced to essay the alphabet and English literature. Here there was natural inaptitude. This was overcome. He became greatly interested in narrations and stories, in which his friend excelled. Warren usually accompanied him home to his mother's, where were the books with illustrations, from which Charles had drawn some of the stories. There, too, he found Charles's youngest brother, a vivacious youth about his own age, to whom he took at once. At first he stood in awe of the tall, grave woman, Charles's mother. He soon overcame that, and then he liked her very much. He often went up there with Charles, sometimes on horseback, sometimes in a sleigh, in which Dolp worked beautifully. Finally it came to be understood that he was to spend each Sunday at Mrs. Wayne's ; going home with Charles at the end of each week, and returning with him the ensuing Monday morning. At school he came and went at pleasure, but had no task or exercises there. Before spring, he was able to master the simpler stories of the books,



and was quite excited when he first discovered that he could extract the tale himself. Writing was easier, and he became quite an adept in the simpler problems of arithmetic.

To Rossville, this turning him into the form, the habits, of civilized life, was a prodigy and a subject of constant comment. The poor boy found the world too kind and patronizing, and he shrunk almost as quickly from its ostentatious overkindness as he had formerly from the harshness and cruelty with which it defended itself against him. As spring approached, and the end of his school drew on, Charles became very anxious for the future of his young charge. He could not have him with himself. All the Rosses except Portia and the family of Henry had looked coldly on his efforts to rescue the boy. He was the family enemy, was not only out of the church, but his family were Unitarians; and at the best the child's mother was only half-heartedly interested in the redemption of her offspring. The Markses were warmly enlisted, and Warren became much attached to them. It was finally arranged that he should be received into the store as a sort of property clerk, care for the horses, and make himself generally useful. Charles had a real affection for the boy; had a great compassion for every form of misfortune and suffering, which largely decided him to choose the medical profession instead of the law, against the advice of his friends. Then he was near and dear to Portia, and the son of an implacable enemy; and though to him it seemed all the time that the mother would rather the wretched boy should perish utterly than owe his rescue to him, he was determined that his utmost should be given to his redemption.



## CHAPTER V.

## THE WAY OF IT.

MORE than once, notwithstanding the discouragements and many doubts that awaited the young man's efforts in the rescue of Warren, he mentally repeated his exclamatory declaration to Portia, "Oh, I wish every thing was as easy!" He more than once recalled that singular conversation, and wondered what she really meant. Whatever it was, it certainly had not been very easy for him with her. At the end of his four-months' sojourn at Rossville, so pleasant in many respects, so important in the results of his school, to all concerned, he admitted to himself with a long inhalation, that he stood toward the young lady in the same tantalizing, uncertain, hoping, fearing relation that he did at the beginning of the winter. She seemed unwilling that he should escape beyond recall by a wave of her hand, and in some subtle way she restrained his approach within a prescribed circle. She came to school, and acted the pupil with the same apt docility as at the academy. Outside when he met her she was the graceful, self-possessed, society young lady who met him on his first return from Warren. From the two most powerful of her sisters, he became at once aware that he was to receive nothing but war waged by all the methods known to the sex; and, instead of finding in Portia a generous ally, she usually exhibited herself in the colors of a neutral. He soon learned that while they opposed him, they had an affirmative campaign for the disposition of the young lady.



In Warren he made the acquaintance of a young Wilmot, a distant relative of Mrs. Robert Ross; heavy of person, but reputed heavy of purse, which, in the eyes of the house of Ross, beautified not only his form, but supplied all the mind needful. When Wayne himself was inquired of concerning him, ere he was made aware of his rivalry, he described him as "A very clever fellow (American), and nearly half witted." The young man came on to Rossville during the holidays, made his headquarters at Brown's, where the young married Rosses lived, and opened a vigorous campaign, with Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Barber commanding the two wings. It lasted not quite two weeks; and notwithstanding the coolness, philosophy, and self-possession of Mr. Wayne, they managed to make it decidedly uncomfortable for him. The first week was signalized by a party at the Grays', to which Mr. Wayne was rather ostentatiously not invited. This he could manage to endure. The second was illustrated by a more extensive party given by Mrs. Barber, who so managed that her invitation should reach him so late, and under circumstances, as to preclude his attending. In this transaction Portia was apparently concerned. It was a thing simply to be endured. On Portia's return to school, it was not in the young man's power to wear toward her precisely the same manner as before. At least, she detected it. Of course he would never refer to what had occurred, and she could not. There was at the time a great deal said of the treatment to which the young man was subjected; and the Rosses were talked over, almost to their faces, as they had not been since the purchase of the Wayne property. Indeed, those old matters were brought up again. So far as the public was concerned, Charles was more popular than ever; but clearly there was one added obstacle between himself and the



young heiress. Some who narrowly watched the young people fancied a persistent effort on the part of the girl to compensate by her manner to him, or to show that she in no way abetted the slight so openly put upon him. It was easy to see, too, that it was quite lost on him; and several weeks passed before the bitterness was exorcised from his feelings. To the young ladies and gentlemen under his care he was the obliging, interested, at times almost the inspired, instructor, and at the same time frank, courteous, and gentlemanly companion. He was no more than this to Miss Ross. She felt the difference; and, had she cared, she might have seen that there was a limit beyond which, if repelled, he would not be likely to persevere in attentions to her. Too young and uncomprehending to know of the possible source of coldness between his dearest friends, Warren was conscious of a change in the atmosphere surrounding them. Portia would give him no light, and he did not ask the young man. Young Mrs. Stewart, who lived out on the other road, — a warm friend of the Waynes, and a very particular friend and admirer of the medical student, whose husband, it was thought, could buy all Rossville at its own price, — proposed to give a party on his account, from which her friends dissuaded her for the time.

With the close of his school young Wayne spared no time in the vigorous resumption of his studies. He might not hope ever to commend himself to the reigning powers and spirit of the house of Ross. He had many evidences that the youngest daughter would not object to him for lack of wealth or its expectations. He was ambitious, and eager to take his place in the world; and not the least of his incentives was to win position, that he might finally offer himself under circumstances which would excuse her acceptance of him in the face of her family, if she would.



Would she accept him? It would not mar his life if she did not, yet just how he should endure it if she refused him he would not now try to imagine. Something, some sort of assurance perhaps, he might obtain, to carry him forward over the intervening years. That or the other thing. He had proposed to return to Warren; but the advantages with Dr. Grant were quite equal, and he could not make up his mind to leave the neighborhood in the present state of his affair with Portia. He also was glad to remain near his mother, with whom he could live part of the time. Rossville was off his direct route to and from Charter; but it was only a step remote from either place with the fleet, springy Dolphin. It is true, save Warren and his few intimate friends there, he had no excuse for going to Rossville; but, notwithstanding the active enmity of Laura Barber, he was equal to going to her house directly, and calling for the young lady herself. This enmity of her friends to him had never been referred to between the young people, nor had their own relations been more than hinted at by the youth. The spring passed, and summer was running into autumn; and while, at the few times he could manage to see Portia, she met him with a frank, steady kindness which perhaps under the circumstances meant much, it was not at all satisfactory to the young man, and he was not the least certain that he was making any advance in her favor. Her goodness to him might mean nothing at all.

The Stewarts, by the way of the roads, lived a mile and a half from Rossville. There was a footway through a charming region, passing a bit of beautiful forest, leading from their place on the west side of the river to the village, of not half that distance, and very much travelled. Mrs. Stewart was but a year or two older than Portia. They had always been very pleasant acquaintances, which



had within the last few months ripened into a decided friendship. Anne Stewart liked Portia on her own account very well — on Charles's very much. She was quite sure it would be all right. Portia was a brave, true girl. Let him be patient. Of course Anne was an immense comfort to the young lover. She could not say much of the Rosses. Dave Stewart was something of their style in viewing matters, as she thought with a sigh; and that trait of Portia's family was passed in silence. Mrs. Stewart was on pleasant terms with all Rossville, and heard all the little village talk, which it were better she had not retailed to Wayne; but she did, and some of it annoyed him. She and Portia ran to one another by the pleasant path, and the young lady in a guarded way was ready to talk up her lover with his friend. Like every thing where he was concerned, she was very prudent, and said nothing that had any special significance. Charles was too manly and proud to attempt to woo through his friend, or even to make her a convenience. He never sent messages by her, or sought any advantage from her frequent meetings with the young lady. The Stewart house was on a road which he often passed over between his mother's and Dr. Grant's; and he very usually stopped there, but had never been so fortunate as to meet Portia there. He did not attempt to open a written correspondence with the young lady. He scorned all but the most open and direct approaches. He never sent her even a book by Warren. He waited till he could deliver them himself, as a lover would prefer to. He had for some time meditated a more decided step: an accident finally contributed the opportunity.

On his return from Dr. Grant's on the afternoon of an early September day, as he approached Stewart's, he found the ladies saying last words at the gate, across the



road in front of the house, opening into a field traversed by the path referred to. As he rose the top of the hill on which the house stood, he saw them stand on the door-step, linger at the gate, pause in crossing the road, and finally stop at the great gate on the other side. He sprang from Dolph, whose rein he attached to a post, and approached them unnoticed. They again touched each other's lips and stepped apart.

"They kissed and parted at the door, parted and kissed on the door-stone, kissed without parting at the gate, walked with embracing arms across the road, and sustained each other with kisses at the final farewell. Who would not say adieu under such consolations?" he cried gayly to them, approaching. "Pray, ladies, part that way with me," and the three joined in a pleasant little laugh.

"He half deserves one for his wit," said Anne.

"His audacity rather, if at all," said Portia, coloring at the mere idea.

"Kisses impart wisdom, they say," said the young man gravely.

"Oh, what long years since you had one!" cried Portia with another laugh.

"Pray give me wisdom," with a plaintive voice, proffering his lips playfully.

"When I have lost the last vestige of all I ever had," was her answer.

"Ah! that would prove that none but fools kiss. That is not my theory," he replied.

"She would be a fool who"—

"Kissed a woman when other lips were by," he interrupted her with.

"Do you two talk this way when you are alone?" asked Anne.

"She never permits me to be alone with her," said the young man gravely.



“When last we met he did not talk at all,” she replied to Anne.

“What I would have said I dared not, and common things were unworthy to be said to her,” was his response.

“There, Portia, what can you say to that?” said Anne, laughing.

“Such silence is golden,” with a little color.

There fell a silence, when the young man with his usual directness said to Miss Ross, —

“I very, very much want to go to your father’s vill. Please permit me to walk down with you.” Its playful manner relieved it of gravity.

“Pray, when you were at the Corners, why did you not ride there, Mr. Wayne?” she asked.

“I did not want to go then ;” with absolute candor.

“When did the wish to go first take you?” asked Anne.

“When my eyes met the form of Miss Ross.”

He threw open the gate, Portia passed, he followed, closed it, and walked along by her side. It was a delicious afternoon, rich with creamy sunshine, and musical with the monotonous chant of the late summer crickets and grasshoppers. Anne stood looking after them, the beautiful pair, as they moved slowly down the slope into the little valley, with their gay voices floating back to her. As they rose the winding way on the other side, and turned to avoid a bend in the near river, her eyes still followed them till they entered the dark, still green wall of leaves which hedged the field round at the margin of the wood, bearing on their forms the warm color of the sun’s rays under its dark arched way. A moment golden bright they seemed to stand, and then melted into the shadow of the wood. She looked an instant after they



disappeared, then turned and walked thoughtfully toward the house. A low call from Godolphin drew her attention. She approached and caressed the beautiful animal. "He has deserted you. Has he gone and left you? You don't understand it, do you? He may bring you a beautiful mistress some time. Do you hope he will, Dolphin?" and the knowing creature, with his human ways, nodded his head as he had been taught, as if that was his wish. "She is a woman, and you can trust her, can't you?" and he lifted his head, and gave a look down the way they went as if that was a matter for grave consideration. Then he neighed loudly, as if he would call his young master back.

"You say nay to that, do you? Well, we will see, Dolphin."



## CHAPTER VI.

## WHAT CAME OF IT.

BRIGHTLY and gayly his words ran on as they went down into the low ground. As they rose the other side, he became silent, abruptly so ; and Portia saw that his face had completely changed its expression, and his idle words ceased as of themselves. Slowly they rose the hill, and silently passed the opening through the bank formed of the thick-growing small trees and brush, where Anne lost sight of them. Holding herself steadily, the young girl, after one or two efforts to dispel the ominous silence, walked on in mute expectation by her silent companion's side.

“What I said at the gate — that what I wanted to say, I dared not, was true,” he began. There was a strain in voice, in spite of him ; and Portia was startled a little. “I knew I should surprise you. Don't, for the world, be alarmed, Miss Ross. Things must some time be said to young ladies. I will not now say all of what must some time be said, if you permit it. Some time, I hope I may ask of you all — all that a man can ask of a woman.” His voice half broke with the burden of the last words, and he moved on for several steps — and very slowly, as by their common sympathy. Then, quite master of himself, and very warmly, “You must know that in all the world, there can be but one girl, one young lady, one woman for me ; and that she is your precious self.”

“How should I know that?” after a moment, and



quite her re-assured self, as the great question was not then to be asked.

“By all my conduct for this year past: I don’t mean to leave it to inference and doubt. My whole heart has gone out to you, as it goes but once in life, with homage, reverence, worship, with entire devotion, unselfishly.” The fervor of his voice left no doubt of the intensity of his earnestness and perfect truth. “I know you believe this. I want, if I may, to win the one return — some time. I cannot complain. To me you are so surrounded, by those dearest to you, with enmity to me, that I cannot approach you as young men may usually approach the young women of their acquaintance, and win their favor if they may. Your sister, however, is so bitter toward me that she would rather Warren would remain as he was than be rescued through me.”

“Mr. Wayne,” spiritedly, “you shall not speak to me in that way. You cannot, if what you have just said is true.”

They walked on some yards.

“It was unfortunate, perhaps — unfortunate that I attempted to speak at all. If so, I can be easily answered. I did not mean so much to cast reproach on your sister as to bring to your notice the difficulty under which I labor. Though you may not care for that, — may be glad of it.”

“You thought it would be easy, Mr. Wayne, if you thought of it at all,” smiling archly, was her reply.

Another silence of two or three minutes, and the girl began to think he would not resume.

His spirit was touched by her words.

“I did not expect any assistance from you. I did not mean to merit such words.” After a pause: “What I wished to ask, and all I dared to hope for now, is that, knowing my sentiments towards you, you would consent



to regard me as a suitor; one who approached you for the purpose, if possible, of winning the highest regard you can bestow on a man."

"I do not know as I now understand you, Mr. Wayne—what you would wish." After a moment's pause: "There is nothing you ask me to do. I should be less a woman than I am if I could hear such words from you unmoved or without gratitude—that you hold me so highly."

"I have no wish, no purpose, Miss Ross, to see you further, to call upon you, be received by you, except as one who calls and sues for your highest favor. This is much to ask. I do ask it. If you cannot accord it, accident alone must cause us to meet in the future, if we ever do."

"And I should manage to endure it," she was going to say. She checked herself. She was so entirely mistress of the position that there were a thousand temptations to torture him a little, but his face was so grave, palid in fact, and his voice so deep, earnest, and thrilling; and, then, he had said words to her that should set apart such a man as sacred, at least to respect and tender consideration.

"I mean, why may not things go on as they are—as they have done?" A different thing entirely.

"Oh! they can, if such is your wish. If, on what I have said, you think me entitled to no more consideration than you accord to all your gentleman acquaintances, that is just the thing."

"Perhaps," laughing and blushing, "perhaps old fashioned Sunday-night sparkings, sitting up all night, would meet your views, Mr. Wayne?" There was a touch of irony in this.

"My views had not gone quite so far back. Besides,"



with a smile, "I heard it whispered that the youngest and most favored daughter of a House had made it understood that gentlemen would not be permitted to remain in her society after an early hour of the evening, to which there were no exceptions."

"Ten o'clock, Mr. Wayne. You were correctly informed, though I believe no proclamation was ever made ;" very gravely this was said.

"Every lady has an unquestioned right to attach such conditions as she pleases to the avenues of approach to her. I am not learned in this matter. Possibly, a lady willing to go so far as to receive a gentleman as a suitor would be willing, on his request, to advise him when he might hope to find her at leisure," he replied.

"Oh, that is too formal ! All the world would soon understand and talk about it."

"All the world of Rossville."

"This is so new to me, I must think it over ;" and she walked on gravely, as if turning the interesting subject in that exquisite little head of hers.

"It commits you to nothing in the world, Miss Ross, except to permit me to see you at some named time. You can cancel even that. You certainly need not name another time ; and you will be just as free to refuse me afterward as you are to-day."

"But it is awful—this naming some time when you may call. It don't seem to you as it does to me, or you would not ask it. Do you know, Charley" (she never called him Charley before), "I have always thought that you were the most generous and noble-hearted of men, and would not ask any thing of me, would never complain of me, nor think illy of me, and now you distress me so terribly ! you frighten me. Let things remain just as they are, please."



“Certainly ; just as you please, Miss Ross : the matter is wholly in your hands,” a little coldly.

Surely he ought to have been willing to leave it where it was, after such a whole-souled, hearty little speech. Indeed, he might have inferred a great deal more than was said. Most men would ; but he did not, nor was he then at all pleased. He, however, said no more, and began to talk about Warren, whom he had not seen for several weeks, and found that he was getting on very well and hopefully, was regularly at home at night, was interested in his books, and constant in his inquiries about his friend Charley Wayne.

Portia, relieved of the burden which the young man’s words had laid upon her, flashed up wonderfully about Warren, on whom her deeply disturbed emotions effervesced in quite a rapture.

“O Mr. Wayne ! how grateful and happy, how proud — only it is not a thing to excite pride — you must be that you could do this great thing for Warren,” turning her eyes upon him, now tender with feeling, and dewy with tears.

“Do you remember of my wishing that some other things might be as easy, and the funny questions you asked me?” was his answer.

A bright flash came over the face, doubly beautiful with emotion, as it turned suddenly from him. Forward they went, the youth still grave, the maiden with flushed face and suffused eyes, through the wood and along the high cliffy bank of the river, till they approached the residence of John Ross the younger, where Portia proposed to call, and where she would part with her lover. “My lover,” “A very lover,” her heart was saying. Or, after all, was it only a highly-colored fancy? While yet in the open field she turned to him, with the ruddy color deepening on cheek and brow, —



“Mr. Wayne, will you be quite at leisure Sunday evening next, at about six?” she asked ingenuously.

“Entirely at leisure,” with an eager flash of his eyes.

“We have our Sunday evening supper at six or a little later. Sometimes there are some of the outside of the family there; often we are alone. It will give Mrs. Barber great pleasure to have you come and take supper with us. You will have a pleasant reception from her, I am sure.”

“Mrs. Barber! Thank you,” with fervor. “It will give me the greatest pleasure imaginable.”

“We have before spoken of inviting you,” she said, “but something always prevented.” As he knew it had too well.

“Thank you, Miss Ross; and I will not trespass on the inevitable rule,” with a laugh.

“Mrs. Barber does not enforce the rule on her guests,” she said, a little archly.

“Oh, on her guests!” a little gravely.

They had a very pleasant little call, and were received with marked kindness by Mrs. John Ross. Something very sweet she saw in the face and manner of the maiden; while the youth, though less exhilarated, was in the pleasantest possible spirits, and she drew the happiest auguries of these two.

There he left her, and went light-heartedly back along the now shining way. Was it not, he mentally queried, all he asked, all he wished? It was, and it was not. One thing should certainly have satisfied him, and it did *arguendo*. He had made a direct, broad, explicit declaration of love, only with less copious language, and under more restraint than expressed all he wished to say, and she was not displeased — was pleased, was really quite radiant. He had never seen her so lovely as when he left her. She



had even acknowledged him a suitor, invited him and would receive him as such — only he was the guest of Mrs. Barber. What did she mean by that? What did he care if it pleased her? It was her coy, arch way, and he recalled her praises of him. She did not reject his love; knew he would propose formally at some time, and she gave him that direct encouragement, knowing how he would receive it, that he had asked for it; and so when he reached the woods he sang a lively air. Anne Stewart saw that some pleasant thing had happened, and Dolphin whinnied his approval of the whole affair.

I suppose it never occurred to Charles that in this afternoon's performance of trying to take and score a step forward, he had been the least priggish, and that it would have been as well to have cast his ultimate destiny into the hands of Portia at once, and let her settle it and him if she would. He thought it would be unkind, perhaps unjust to her, to do that. He certainly was warranted in finding out if he could the tendency of his prospects, and govern himself accordingly. Perhaps business principles should govern courtship.

Mrs. Barber received Mr. Wayne quite graciously that Sunday evening. Warren was greatly elated, Mr. Barber was as civil as he knew how. There were, in addition, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Ross and the eldest son and daughter of Henry and Dorcas, who had been pupils of Charles, and were his warm friends and admirers. Portia was sweet, demure, and a little conscious, with the warm blood quite at flood in her cheeks. Charles, who had much humor, and was sometimes witty, was in an exhilarated vein, and said some very happy things. After supper, Portia, himself, and Warren went home with Warren's cousins and spent the evening. On their return, Theodore Ross managed to detach Warren, and Charles was left to



walk back with Portia, the only time, as he noticed, that he was alone with her, and it was so late that he felt that he was not at liberty to expect an invitation to enter the house again. He was not invited. Portia indulged him with a leisurely walk home, and he was so fresh and simple in his feelings that the light touch of her little ungloved hand on his arm quite thrilled him. As they drew near, she said that Laura commissioned her to ask him to call again, when it should meet his convenience. Then came up the question — when might he feel at liberty to do so? Portia did not know, — suggested within five or six weeks. He laughingly proposed three or four. Then she explained that Miss Bronson, whom he remembered, would be there in a few days for a long stay. He remembered Miss Bronson as a youngish old girl, or a well-advanced young one, who had shown herself willing to be cultivated. Just why her presence should be urged as a delay was not explained, nor did he ask. Another impending visitor was not mentioned; and the young lady laughingly proposed four or five weeks as a compromise, and he playfully assented to the shorter period. Then he was permitted to raise the hand which he held for the minute or two, as they stood alone by the front door, and press his lips upon it, and she vanished inside. He found Warren sitting on Godolphin waiting for him. Bidding him a gay good-night, he mounted and went with bounding heart and a springy gallop across and over the intervening hills toward Charter.



## CHAPTER VII.

## THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE.

MRS. STEWART'S party came off on Thursday of the third week after Charles's visit to Rossville, — quite a select little affair. She had the young ladies in the afternoon, and the young gentlemen in the evening, which began early on that day, as it was known the young ladies would be waiting. Among the ladies was Miss Bronson; and with the gentlemen came Mr. Wilmot, who arrived at Rossville that day, and for whom a special invitation was secured. Things happened curiously that evening. Some thought the affair referred to was by conspiracy; and Anne, in her bitterness, accused Portia of being a party to it, as she was, in a very funny way. Quite early in the evening a pair of violin-players appeared, and were placed in the immense old-fashioned kitchen and dining-room of what had been a part of the old farm-house. Miss Bronson was a strict Presbyterian, and could by no possible means or persuasion be induced to remain. Return to Rossville she must, and some gentleman must attend her. The young ladies from Rossville had walked up the very pleasant by-road, and carriages would be there for their return.

Portia at once went to Charles Wayne, who came over from Charter on horseback, and was obliged to return that night.

“Mr. Wayne, I have a very special service to ask of you,” with a look of persuasive sweetness.

“Any thing you wish, Miss Ross, shall be a command.”



"I will not lay it on you in that form, Mr. Wayne. Miss Bronson feels obliged to return immediately. She cannot go alone."

"I shall attend her with pleasure, if she permits; and not without pain, as it takes me from you," was his answer.

"You are very obliging and very complimentary, and it shall be a courtesy rendered to both of us. She will appreciate it. She is a good walker; and, though the moon shines, I can trust you to go by the shortest road," with a smile. "She will be ready at the front door in a minute."

She was as bright and sweet as she could be, and the poor fellow was already compensated. He hastily excused himself to Anne, who at first did not quite understand the import of his words, found his hat and a boy to take his horse to Rossville, and went to the front door, where he could hear the moving strains of the violins. The dance had just opened. Some time elapsed; Miss Bronson lingered, but Anne dashed up to him with — "How came this? Are you really going?"

"I must. She requested it."

"She — who?"

"Portia."

"Portia! You are sold! She wants to be rid of you."

"Rid of me!"

"Ha, ha, ha! How could she manage with you and Wilnot both, do you suppose?"

"Perhaps she was sold herself."

"She is too sharp for that. I would not go."

"I must. She wished it."

"Where is the little pussy. Well, good-night. I shan't see you again." He laughed. "I shall not."



You will see ;” and she flew to the dressing-room, where the deliberate Miss Bronson was leisurely arraying her person for exit ; and Portia, after vainly attempting to aid her, was nervously watching the uninteresting process.

Seeing Anne with severe face at the door, she turned to her, —

“ Is this your work — sending Charley Wayne off with this old — why, he is the guest of the evening : the party was made for him.”

“ I am sorry. What could I do? ”

“ Send somebody else. Why didn’t you come to me? ”

“ She knew Mr. Wayne.”

“ And didn’t know Mr. Wilmot? Ha, ha, ha! O Portia! ”

“ He is a stranger. You would not ask that of him. I knew Mr. Wayne would do it to oblige me. I felt at liberty to ask him,” with the color warm in her cheeks.

“ Yes, and you send him away. His presence might be embarrassing. You are shrewd.”

“ Anne Stewart — what can you mean? ”

“ He is sharp enough to see through it.”

“ Why, you awful girl! ” with a diminution of color.

“ You shall make nothing by this move — sharp little general as you are — in the long run, now remember.”

Portia did not attempt to reply ; did not think that Anne meant all she said, perhaps. She merely added : “ He will not be gone over an hour ; he has sent his horse down, and they will walk across the fields.”

The answer was a scornful laugh, ending with, “ You will not see him again to-night, and don’t expect to — and I hope you won’t ; that will be some punishment! ” And she flew away, leaving Portia disconcerted.

Evidently the heavy Miss Bronson was preparing to make a night of it. She was finally ready ; and Portia



conducted her down the broad stairs, where her lover was awaiting her approach. He received her in silence, with hardly a glance at Portia, and she thought he looked a little gloomy; and she would gladly have said a cheery word to him, but with a bow to her, he gave his arm to her friend, and, after watching them to the front gate, Portia turned and walked toward the dancing-room, and sought the hostess.

“What did you mean, Anne?” she asked seriously.

“Who did first propose the name of Charles Wayne to attend her?” was Anne’s response.

“She said she was acquainted with him, and I went to him of course.”

“And she will find the means of detaining him, and he must return to Charter to-night. He came this afternoon on purpose to attend my party.” She passed her hand around her friend’s slender waist caressingly. “You don’t wonder I was impatient, do you? And now you must do your best to make this pleasant. Of course he will come back, if he escapes that old cat.”

Young Wayne was missed; and it became known where and why he was absent, and some comments were made. The lights were brilliant, the music lively, spirits were gay, and hearts and feet light. Anne quite forgot her vexation; and in the devotion of Wilmot, and the general admiration to which she was accustomed, the heart of Portia evidently was not with the youth she had sent away.

Time sped: the young man did not return, and Anne tried in vain to catch the eyes of the unconscious Portia. Seemingly she was absorbed in the attentions of her suitor and the young men about her. After eleven Anne approached, and placed a slip of paper in Portia’s hand on which was written in pencil:—



"Your foreboding was true. As you know, I am obliged to be at Charter early in the morning. Good-night. C. W."

"It was handed me by the driver of your carriage," Anne explained.

"And what did you forbode?" asked Portia, with seeming indifference.

"I told him he was sold, and would not be back here to-night."

"Oh, yes, that was what you said to me!" and she moved lightly away in the dance.

"And somebody will be paid for this," was the mental comment of the hostess — "and before long, too, I hope."

With Miss Bronson's hand within his arm, the young man moved across the highway toward the great gate opposite.

"I am not going that way, Mr. Wayne," she said, stopping.

"Indeed, it is much the nearest and pleasantest," he answered.

"We came up that way. It is lonely, and there are woods there; and I do not choose that any young gentleman shall be able to say that he walked alone with me over that way by moonlight," primly.

"Miss Ross must have given me a very indifferent character."

"She gave you an excellent character. I must think of every thing."

"Now, if any thing tragic should happen, for instance, think how romantic and picturesque the surroundings would be," he said playfully.

"But I might not be murdered," with a laugh.

"The road is nearly two miles," — it seemed six to



him then — “hilly and lonely, with bits of woods bordering it, and some parts of it lie on the river’s very margin, where any thing may happen,” he urged still playfully.

“Oh, I am enchanted! We will certainly go by the road, Mr. Wayne.”

He hesitated. “Permit me to conduct you back, for one instant. There are three or four buggies with horses ready harnessed, and you will go much easier,” he urged.

“And more expeditious, Mr. Wayne. Now, your liege lady directed you to walk home with me,” she said.

“I quite remember her wish—her lightest is law to me; but to walk this distance for a young lady is a serious undertaking.”

“And I am a serious young lady, Mr. Wayne. I am not in the least hurry. My ‘loan of a lover’ is for the expedition; and you are to look for your reward to your mistress, you know; and the more exacting I am, the greater your self-sacrifice, the greater will be your recompense, of course. Let that console you, Mr. Wayne.”

“I accepted the quest unreservedly, Miss Bronson; and those permitted to serve ladies usually find that, like other virtues, it brings its own exceeding great reward.”

“Your sentiments do you honor; and you are doubtless wise in not stipulating with the sovereign Portia as to what your reward shall be,” a little ironically.

And they walked along to the hill and down it in silence.

“What a perfect little heroine she is! I don’t wonder you young and susceptible fellows are bewitched by her, and so ready to be played off and on and against each other by her,” she said vivaciously.

“Really, Miss Bronson, you are quite confusing.”



“To one already dazed, Mr. Wayne. Do you know much about girls?”

“Not a thing,” with perfect candor.

“I think I’ve been told you had no sisters?”

“Not one. I grew up with boys wholly.”

“That makes you charmingly fresh and simple. You believe in girls, in Portia, — wise young judge, sweet child that she is?”

“Of course. Why shouldn’t I?”

“And you would never dream that you were at this moment a delicious victim of one of her sweet little schemes? Of course not. Who could suspect that little head?”

“Why, Miss Bronson, what do you mean?”

“And then she has a little heart, just enough to make her charming, and not enough to interfere with the little head’s plans.”

“Miss Bronson, she thinks you her friend,” a little severely.

“The truest she has. Am I not proving it to-night by relieving her of your presence a whole evening long?”

“It is easy enough to relieve herself of me,” said the youth with spirit.

“Poor child: she don’t wish it — that is, only for this night.”

“And why this night, pray?”

Her answer was a peal of merry laughter.

“It certainly is a proof of your devotion to her, if what you say of your part is true,” said the young man, a little disconcerted. He could not wholly forget the words of Anne Stewart to the same effect.

“Do you think it nothing to wander through this soft night, under the moon, with a handsome young man, who would be elsewhere, and tease and torture him? It was



devotion to mischief quite as much. Oh! you deserve well at her hands, and I shall be curious to know what reward she gives you." A few steps of silence. "You asked me why she could wish your absence to-night. Perhaps she wished to show her power over you. She knew I could endure the music and dancing,—that I rather like them."

The young man made up his lips for a whistle, but forebore to sound it.

"Still I don't see," he added.

"No, deliciously blind boy, like all the loves. Why, bless its heart, there were two of you!"

"Do you call Wilmot a love?"

"Ha, ha, ha! That is goodish. What was it you said of him,—that he was a clever fellow and devilish near half-witted? It was awfully profane, but its wit made it tolerable. Was that it?"

"I refuse to remember any thing about Wilmot. I deny there is such a man."

"He is very real to-night, Mr. Wayne. And it can't see why there should be but one?"

"She could be certain of my discretion. I am sure I am not jealous and troublesome."

"Oh, dear! no; why should you be, of the nearly half-witted? Don't be too sure—too sure, Mr. Wayne. A fine person, wit, talents, genius, would win against King Midas, with maidens made up after your ideals. Portia is of another pattern."

"And you are her friend! I will not hear you criticise her."

"It is not necessary to praise her to you, and you had better hear me. She greatly admires you, and loves you just the least bit in the world. Is proud to have you devoted to her—don't intend to cast you off—at present."



“Ah-h-h! You are very good,” sarcastically.

“Her sisters are your mortal enemies. She has the family appreciation of wealth. She comes to see the difference. Wilmot is rich. She will be in no hurry. I think you know that. Don’t be too certain, Mr. Wayne.”

“I won’t,” laconically.

A pause. “There, am I not judicious? and how is this inconsistent with the truest friendship?” she asked.

Her companion walked on in silence for some time.

“You would be patient and self-sacrificing. She could trust you. But how might it be with Wilmot?”

“What about Wilmot, pray?” he asked.

“Stupid as you think him, he could hardly be with Portia and yourself, with your friends and admirers around, and she obliged to divide herself between you, without his suspecting. Then he would ask, and somebody would tell, what most people know. Do you see?”

“Well!”

“Well, she don’t want to be rid of Wilmot, nor be obliged to explain. Possibly that throws some light on the position of some of the gentlemen whom you know, Mr. Wayne.”

“And what light does it throw on your friend?”

“That she is a true woman, and her name Portia. Don’t you choose from all the world? We cannot, but surely she might have time to choose between two. Oh, you thought the world was all your own! It lies for you in one little waist. It seemed easy to put your arms about it.”

To say that the young man was not moved, greatly disturbed, would do injustice to the ingenuity of his lady mentor. They crossed the river, reached the road on the other side, which led to Rossville, a mile away, turned the acute angle, and walked slowly forward, the lady reg-



ulating the gait at which they moved, which was of the slowest. As they went, the young man attempted to speak of two or three indifferent things, but found himself unable to break the weird spell of distrust and foreboding so subtly woven about him. As they turned south along the river under its eastern high bank, wood covered, they were quite in shadow; and the chill air of the river valley smote the blood and spirit of the youth with a nervous tremor like an ague, which he could hardly control.

“I wonder,” resumed the pitiless woman, “how she will manage next Sunday evening! I confess I am looking forward to it with much anticipation. Wilmot will be there, and she can hardly send you off to walk with me,” laughing.

“The devil!” was the young man’s mental exclamation. “She knows every thing: of course she is a confidant.”

“When you were there before, some young people were invited; and then you went for a walk, and when you came back it was ten o’clock. Ha, ha, ha! That ten o’clock rule is too funny: it will rule you out, while Wilmot will remain. Do you think that is enforced against him?”

Wayne, though the sweetest and most pleasant-tempered young man in the world, was quite enraged. He could have shaken the woman from his arm, and cast her into the river. It occurred to him that she was more likely to be the ally of Laura Barber than of the winsome Portia; though he was greatly disturbed about her, and he determined to put a stop to this gossip. “Miss Bronson, you obviously have a purpose in telling me this stuff. If an opportunity has really been made to give you the chance, which I do not believe so far as Miss Ross is concerned, you have used it industriously. I refuse to think illy of her. Your powers of conversation are considerable. I



would greatly prefer to hear you on some less interesting subject." This he said in enforced good temper.

"You will be quite at liberty to report me to Miss Ross."

"Pardon me, Miss Bronson. If you had the slightest conception of what makes up a gentleman, you would know that is impossible."

"Indeed, Mr. Wayne, I have seen gentlemen before. They are usually less rude."

"Our standards differ, Miss Bronson. We will not discuss them."

"Suppose Miss Ross should inquire of you what passed between us?" she asked, after deliberation with herself.

"She will not."

"If she should?"

"She will be left wholly to your report, Miss Bronson."

They went on in silence for some time, the young man angrily determining not to say another word, except to answer questions; nor did he care what her impression of his manner might be. He was certain of her purpose. She was an enemy not entitled to the rules of honorable warfare even.

"Mr. Wayne, were all your brothers like yourself, — lady-killers?" she asked, with insufferable coolness.

"I am not aware that any of us have ever enjoyed the luxury of that pastime," he answered, a little with the manner of a man who would find present pleasure in a performance of that kind, casting his eyes toward the river, as if calculating the facilities.

The lady had a purpose.

"I have been told that your elder brother quite broke the heart of a young lady, the present Mrs. John Ross," she said.

"The story was, that the debonair John Ross, jun., sup-



planted that unfortunate young man, and bore the young lady away from him. When I last saw her she seemed in quite robust health," was his reply.

A turn of the river carried the road up its high bank, and commanded a view of Rossville.

There the lady came to a stand-still, seemingly quite refreshed, tossed back the cloud from her face, and looked about, serene and unruffled.

"Mr. Wayne, what time is it?"

"Miss Bronson, I am not the possessor of a watch. I should think it was about" —

"Spare me, in your present mood, Mr. Wayne. You were about to say twelve or thirteen o'clock," laughing.

"You are a lady of discernment, Miss Bronson," gravely.

She looked leisurely over the fine moonlit landscape. "How lovely it is!" she exclaimed, to which he offered no response. He was a very young man, and only a man. "You wished me to change the subject, Mr. Wayne. What do you think of the moon?"

"She seems quite reflective to-night," dryly.

"If she sees us, what do you suppose she thinks of us?"

"That one of us is a fool, and the other very near one."

This was spoken in the way of a man who was uttering a commonplace, which no one would question, and in which no one felt the least interest.

"The moon depresses you, Mr. Wayne: I fear you are no true lover," very brightly. "Let me try the stars: what do you think of them?"

"They are a *devil* of a ways off, with most things good to-night," in the same uninterested manner.

The lady started from him — "Mr. Wayne, apologize instantly!" with spirit.



“Certainly ; to whom?”

“Whom? He you named is always near you.”

“At my elbow,” coldly.

“Leave me!”

“With pleasure,” stepping from her.

“What do you mean by speaking in this way, Mr. Wayne?”

“To agree with a lady — as is my duty.”

“Suppose I should say that you were the rudest man I had ever met?”

“I should certainly assent to the justice of the remark.”

The lady laughed. “Give me your arm, Mr. Wayne.”

“With pleasure — not so great as that with which I heard your last command, but with pleasure, Miss Bronson,” with fine discrimination, tendering his arm ceremoniously, with his hat in his hand.

“You can be the most uncomplimentary gentleman I ever met,” she said, receiving it.

“Yet candor itself, you will admit, Miss Bronson.”

The lady turned, as if to walk down the hill again.

“Do we return to Stewart’s? My orders from Miss Ross were to attend you to Rossville, Miss Bronson.”

The lady looked each way, and seemed a little undecided.

“I am quite under your direction,” she said. “I am a little confused, I believe: I was to take you away from the party,” with a laugh. She drew a watch from the folds of her dress, and consulted it. “After ten,” she said.

“Is that all?” was the surprised response of the gentleman.

“That will do very well,” she said naively, with a little laugh.



“And very well done, though not done quickly,” was his comment.

“I fully understand your feelings, Mr. Wayne, and I quite sympathize with them, I assure you.”

“And I have tried to leave you in no doubt of my appreciation of your motives and conduct, Miss Bronson.”

Little more was said between them; and a few minutes later they parted, seemingly on the pleasantest terms, at the door of Mrs. Barber.

A lady was in waiting for Miss Bronson. So much was discovered by the quick eyes of Wayne, who turned away to find the watchful Warren, who had cared for Godolphin. By the stable-lantern Charles wrote the note which Warren delivered to the carriage-driver, who was about to start for Stewart's. Mounting Godolphin, the youth gave him the rein; and at the forks of the road he turned toward Charter, full of disturbing reflections, doubt, and anger.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## GODOLPHIN AS UMPIRE.

ON the following Sunday the elements were in conspiracy against young Wayne. He was at his mother's. At about three an awful storm of wind and rain came, and raged till nine o'clock. Dolphin was saddled in his stall, and Charles was carefully housed in the parlor. At about five, with a huge overcoat and umbrella, he mounted, and attempted to face the storm. The strong wind turned his umbrella, and blew the covering from the frame; and though he was not a hundred yards from the house, his clothes were saturated ere he gained cover. There was no help for it. Nothing but pictures of the winsome Portia in the presence of Wilmot; the indomitable Miss Bronson, whom he could easily hate, and whom he was anxious to meet before Miss Ross, with Wilmot and Mrs. Barber as witnesses. He felt that he should acquit himself well; and he was certain that he had been falsely reported, — how falsely he could not imagine. He had many causes for anxiety. The rain ceased about nine, and he mounted and rode toward Rossville, three miles away. The roads were badly washed and the night dark. He set out fully intending to call, and excuse himself as he might. As he went forward his spirits evaporated, and he was depressed and in doubt when he reached the road that would take him to his mistress. The hour was unseasonable, how much so cannot now be appreciated. In his uncertainty the brilliant idea struck him to leave the matter to Dol-



phin, who had been much at Rossville, where he was a favorite, and well cared for. There was no doubt what his decision would be. Charles held him to a walk, and then laid the reins on his withers, leaving his fortune wholly to him. Without hesitation the mischievous or wise brute turned to the more remote Charter. What turn this little tale would have taken, if any, had he turned toward Rossville, will not be known. The youth rode slowly on, feeling that Providence and Dolphin also were against him.

Three days later, the first leisure he could command, he walked along the one street of Rossville. He met Warren by the bridge, went with him to Marks's, where he remained a few minutes, when he proceeded directly to the Barber's, rang the bell, was permitted to wait a good while, when Portia, sweet and cool, walked into the parlor. She received him pleasantly, and threw him a little off his mental balance by withholding her hand. But a few words were spoken when —

“Miss Ross, you may have observed that I was not here on Sunday evening.”

She believed he was not. There were Mr. Wilmot and Miss Bronson and one or two others. The evening was pleasant, very.

“I am charmed. But I am a little embarrassed how to shape my excuse,” he said ingenuously. “And while” —

“Perhaps you had better call on Laura. I will gladly help you with her,” she said coolly and with a little irony.

“As you please. Till she comes permit me — unless you were too much absorbed, you may remember that there was an awful tempest of wind and rain, from mid-afternoon till late in the evening, of the day mentioned.”

She did not remember.

“Well?”



Then in a picturesque way, but in the third person, he described his effort and mishap of the afternoon, which was appreciated. In the same way he sketched the journey of the evening, the cheerless reflections of the traveller, and the final submission to the arbitrament of Dolphin, and his award. Portia was almost in convulsions of laughter through the whole.

“O wise young master! O wise Dolphin! Wiser than his master, and still weak-minded for a horse. Some one must take them both in hand,” she said vivaciously.

“I wish some one would.”

“They must never be trusted out together again. They had better part,” she added.

“They have. I walked here this morning.”

“Dolphin felt the folly of it, and refused again,” she remarked.

“Doubtless. Then in our excuse it may be remembered that it was near the fatal bar of ten.”

“Indeed,” her manner changing, “you say this well. Who was it on Thursday evening, to a lady, spoke derisively of the ‘little Puritan’ and her notions of propriety, and boasted that her rules were not for him?”

“I do not know, I never heard of such a transaction.”

“Do you say you did not?”

“Most emphatically. Call the lady.”

“Call the lady! It was convenient for you to remain away till she had left.”

“Do you believe this of me?” spiritedly.

“Of course, — I choose to.”

“I shall not attempt to shake your faith in it,” stung almost beyond endurance. “Mr. Marks and Warren are the only persons I have seen in Rossville.” His color had receded, but his voice remained steady.

Portia, without being excited, was certainly toned up,



and her breath came quiveringly. Evidently the young man had no more that he felt like saying, and remained silent.

“Mr. Wayne, I trust you had a charming walk the other evening,” ironically spoken.

“For which I am indebted to you,” in a dry, indifferent manner.

“You must have found the lady very interesting.”

“Doubtless. She was very much interested.”

“You spoke playfully of murdering her.”

“I saw one capital place for drowning, on the way.”

“It was in your role of lady-killer, doubtless, you intended to act.”

The young man’s lips curled, but remained mute.

“I believe you attributed to me the sending you away from Stewart’s the other night, purposely to avoid the embarrassment of your overpowering presence.”

“And you believe that?”

“Hear me out, it is a labor to say it all. So completely infatuated with you am I, that were you to remain, another, a rich but stupid suitor, would certainly discover it.”

The young man rose, took a step toward the now excited girl, and said, “In your heart and soul, you know that is utterly, utterly false. You remember what I said to you four or five weeks ago. You know that was true. You know I have said no word, thought no thought, not inspired by the love I then declared to you.”

The face of the young girl softened, and her eyes turned away.

She resumed, — “You left Stewart’s about eight, and you reached here a little before eleven,” musingly; and then, looking up, “Mr. Wayne, I am a woman, and am curious to know what was said between you and the lady I intrusted to your care, if you have time. I was foolish



enough to think that you undertook that with pleasure, for me; that if you spoke of me it would not cause me to crimson with shame and indignation, and that you might come back to me and let me thank you, even in Mr. Wil-mot's presence."

The young man arose, approached her, and bent with one knee to the floor at her feet. She sprang from him with the word, "Never!" He stood an instant and walked away. "Miss Ross," he said, in a hopeless sort of way, "you believe all the stuff that has been said to you, notwithstanding I have shown you my whole heart. You spurn me."

"Your whole heart! Oh! I know you importuned me."

"Importuned!"

"Importuned me into some recognition of what you called your love."

"You certainly will be free from further importunity."

"Do you wish to say to me what you did say to Miss Bronson, Mr. Wayne?" she asked.

"Not one word. I certainly hoped for a different reception. Nothing in word or thought of mine prepared me for this."

"What did you expect?"

"I hoped for one little word, one look or touch of the hand, to be remembered."

"And you have not found it. You looked for the sign of a weakness, which existed only in your fancy, Mr. Wayne."

"It is something to have that dispelled, if it was only in my fancy," he said coldly. "I saw Warren this morning: I did have it in my mind to say a word of him."

"He has been a strong card, Mr. Wayne. You need not remind us of what we owe you on his account."

"Pardon me. I doubtless have your permission to



take my leave," he said with dignity and without anger. "I have not utterly mistaken you; and some time you may doubt the statements that have been made to you, however little regard you may have for me."

"I shall be gladder than you give me credit for, to find that I am mistaken," she said with signs of emotion. The young man raised his hand as if she would place hers in it. As she did not, he lifted it silently to his lips, and walked away without another word.

Portia was surprised at his going, and from a window saw him walk away. She was so accustomed to see him with his favorite Dolphin, almost as much a favorite of hers, that there was something in this unusual appearance of his being solitary and walking that was a little touching. She had not believed — not half believed — the statements of Miss Bronson. She was prepared to disbelieve them all. She felt safe in the love of the young man, and believed he would set it all right. She thought he would come to her the next day after the party. He did not come even the Sunday evening, when she was so certain he would. The story had been constantly dinned in her ears till she was doubting and unhappy. When he came she said scarcely a word she had intended, and those not as she had planned. She had coolly accused and asserted, and refused his word; became angry, and spoke scornfully, and he had answered her proudly and — and as a man should. He had even knelt at her feet like a knight, and would have plead his cause, and she had refused to hear him. He had gone away silently and haughtily in anger; but she had told him how glad she would be to have it all set right, and he would come back and they should make it up. She had meant to invite him there again, for of course he would explain it all. What could have induced her to speak of poor Warren as



she did? And he only wanted a word, a touch of her hand, even a little look to carry away, and he had not received it. She even taunted him with that. And he had gone away, on foot and alone; and she went to her room and had a good cry. Poor girl! She could not say a word to Laura. She finally was refreshed by her tears. Her sister came round, curious to know what had happened, and said she supposed a lover's quarrel, and she asked when Mr. Wayne would call. Portia would let her know in time. Laura had never shown so much interest in the affair, and really seemed quite friendly, yet Portia did not feel like confiding in her.

When Warren came home he wanted to know whether Charley had been there, and what had happened; and Portia wanted to know what he had said to Warren, and he told her, and of his conversation with Marks, and that Wayne went in and shook hands with Mrs. Marks and all of them.

"That was when he first came into the village. Marks said he was going away. He has sold Godolphin."

"Sold Dolphin?" asked Portia. "Why, what has happened?"

"I don't know. He said he had about given him away to Dave Stewart."

Then something had happened, sure enough. All this occurred before he came to her. So it was not in consequence of her quarrel with him. But then he had not told her of that. Well, how could he? Of course he would: that was partly what he came for, and to get some little, sweet token, that he would prize and carry away with him. He certainly would not go clear away without letting her see him again. He would let her know he was going, if he was. She went over it a good deal that night and the next morning. One comfort:



Wilmot would not trouble her any more, nor would Miss Bronson. What could have been her motive? Was she in the interest of Wilmot? Did she make it all up? Who could have put every thing into her head? She would go and see Anne Stewart the next morning. She owed her a party call, and that would be an excuse. Anne would scold her, and she deserved it, but she could tell her something.



## CHAPTER IX.

## PORTIA'S PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

ANNE received Portia just a bit coolly. Looked her over, and fancied she did not feel half bad enough, but knew her call had a purpose beyond the performance of social duty. She liked her very well,—was taking her quite into her capacious bosom. She would be wary with her.

“You don't deserve it,” she said, as she kissed her; but there was a wistful expression in the girl's eyes that appealed touchingly to her, as she said in reply, —

“You know I have no friends, Anne,” in a little, miserable voice; though she smiled, and her eyes were clear, and free from tears.

“You ought to be congratulated, Portia, for your success in sending away your lover from my party,” she began.

“Have you forgiven me, Anne?” Portia asked in reply.

“Oh! I had it out with you then. I told you you would be paid for it, though you don't appear to care much. You really did not think of sending him clear away for good or bad, and all.”

“He did not go wholly away, though I did think he would come back to me that night. I saw him yesterday,” she said.

“Yes, he came here,” replied Anne, thinking she would stand on the reserve, and answer questions to begin with.



“Was he very angry? I—I did not mean to use him very, very badly.”

“He was not angry. He did not say very much, and laughed about it,” said Anne carelessly.

“Laughed? He thought it good fun, I suppose;” hurt by this speech.

“Such fun as it would be to be murdered. He is one of those deep-natured men who laugh under torture.”

“What did he say?” greatly relieved with the idea of his suffering.

“Not much.”

“Any thing as to what Miss Bronson told him?”

“He said she was a queer friend of yours. He refused to hear her, and then she must have told you, what she accused you of to him, as coming from him; and he said you believed her against him.”

“Did he say more?”

“No. Yes, he said that he had no place, not the least, in your heart. You had never given him hardly a bit of encouragement, and you never could have really cared for him; and that was the end of it.”

“And that was the end of it,” repeated Portia. “Is he still here?” looking away.

“Mr. Stewart took him to the lake last night,” was the answer.

Portia looked at her for a moment, her color receding.

“Where has he gone?”

“I do not know.”

“Anne, you do: you must know. You are joking.”

“I really do not know.”

“Was it very sudden, his going?”

“Finally it was.”

“And that was the end of it! Did he say more about that?” eagerly.



“He said that Rossville would say you had rejected him, as Sarah Warren rejected his brother Forrester, or perhaps that Wilmot had set him aside, as Forrester had been by your brother.”

“Oh! I don't care about that. His final going was sudden?”

“Yes. You see, the next day after our party he had to be in Hudson to meet the medical society at ten in the forenoon.”

“He never told me that.”

“Why should he? Besides, you sent him off. He would have given the world to have seen you that night. He thought you cared for him then. He was dissatisfied with his examination at Hudson.”

“Did he fail?” starting as she spoke.

“Fail? Of course not. He said it was a mere sham, that the doctors didn't know any thing; and he determined to go to Philadelphia, and graduate from the medical college. He did not intend to go before Monday; but Lord! when he came from you, — well, you know what you said to him, — he insisted that David should go with him last night.”

After a moment's silence, “And so he has gone to Philadelphia?” she asked.

“No;” and after a pause, “I don't know. You know, the only thing he had in the world was Dolphin. Well, he wanted Stewart should advance him one hundred and fifty dollars on him. He had been offered two hundred and fifty dollars for him. He did not want to sell him. Well, David put him off till they got to the lake; and then he — if he is my husband — he got the horse for seventy-five dollars, and Charles has a year to redeem him in.” And then the hot, indignant tears rushed into her eyes, over which she pressed her hands for a full minute. “Oh!



he had no friend in the world who would aid without robbing him. Of course, a young man can't go to college on seventy-five dollars, with barely one decent suit of clothes ; and of course he won't be able to redeem his horse," putting her hands over her eyes again.

"Oh, it is too bad!" cried the moved Portia, in real anguish.

In her indignation Anne turned upon her. "Yes, when a Wayne's property is sacrificed, none but a Ross should profit by it."

"What do you mean?" asked Portia : "is this my fault? Why should a Ross profit when a Wayne loses his property?" with spirit.

Anne was too much disturbed to be kind, or even prudent.

"Did you never hear of the purchase of the Wayne lands by your father, Portia?" she asked.

"Never: what was it?" with the color receding.

"Then, ask Mrs. Barber or Mrs. Gray. They'll tell you."

But Portia would not be put off; and Anne told the story as it had been preserved in her family, friends of the Waynes, and also the story of Portia's brother John wooing Forrester's girl-love. Portia was greatly excited over the tale, and quite overcome when she was informed that her own large and beautiful farm, set off from her father's property to her, was a part of the Wayne domain, purchased for less than a dollar an acre. She could not conceal her distress. She now, for the first time, understood the enmity, and the before, to her, preposterous course of her sisters toward Charles Wayne. She shuddered at the thought that the wretched condition of her father, the early all but ruin of Warren, were judgments for this ill-doing ; while the assurance that she herself had so large a



share of the ill-gained spoil quite crushed her. There had, as Anne said, been some proceedings in the courts to set aside the sale; but, although it failed, the general impression was strongly adverse to the Rosses. As Anne recovered her own pose, she said what she might to soften the effect of her communication, and greatly deplored having made it.

As they returned to the more interesting subject of Charles, Portia said, "Of course he knew all this, and yet he came to me,—me of all the young girls in the world! If I had only known! Oh, if I had known!"

"It is a perfect romance," said Anne, "or will be, maybe, if he comes back," looking eagerly at her friend.

"Where do you suppose he has gone?" asked Portia.

"Stewart thinks he went to his brother Forrester's, in Michigan, who may be able to help him. Go and ask your sister Sarah to tell you all of herself and Forrester, if you care to know. Charles thought she was a little interested in his affair with you."

"She was very kind to him," said Portia, "and I would greatly like to know all about it. Her life has been sad and loveless, as we have all known."

Then they talked over the various things in connection with the main subject, had a lunch, and Portia grew more cheerful. As she was about to leave on her return, a man led Dolphin from the stable, and turned him loose in a small field near the house, where he was seen by the ladies. Portia, who knew him well, and was acquainted with his manners and training, wanted to go into the field where he was. She thought he would know and come to her.

"Do," said Anne vivaciously; "and, if he comes up to you, it shall be a sign that his master will return to you, and you shall give him something as a sign," with a look.



“Oh! I am most afraid to make that a test,” blushing.

She hesitated; and then, taking half a dozen lumps of sugar and two or three small cakes from the lunch-table, she started to go.

“That is hardly fair,” said Anne. “I’ve heard that he is fond of sugar. You will tempt him with it.”

“No, I will only reward him,” said the girl, placing her dainties in a pocket.

On gaining the enclosure she stopped near the entrance. The beautiful animal lifted his head, regarded her a moment, and then walked toward her. As he drew near, he paused, looked again, walked partly around her, when she spoke to him. “Dolphin, you know me, don’t you? Come to me, Dolphin, you beautiful fellow. Dolphin, Dolphin!” extending her empty hand, “you will come to me? You know me, you like me; don’t you, Dolphin?” He came up, held out his nose, took a step, and permitted her to caress his head and neck, smelt about as if he expected something.

She produced the cakes; and he took them one after the other from her hand, and then seemed to look for something else. She proffered a bit of the sugar, which he took from her fingers very daintily, and so on, each one till they were exhausted, and then he gave himself up to her caresses as if he appreciated them. He lowered his head, and permitted her to pass an arm about it, and press it to her bosom; she placed her lips on his forehead, toyed with his splendid mane, and patted and talked to him. Anne, who had not ventured inside the enclosure, was hardly within hearing of her girl talk. “And you like me, and you love your master a great deal more? Why didn’t you bring him to me, you bad Dolphin? You will next time, won’t you? You would then, if you had known, wouldn’t you? Did he sell you? Did he have to sell you? Why didn’t



you come to me?" and more. "And now I must go. Good-by. Good-by." The horse had been taught to nod his head at these words. "Good-by, Dolphin. Now I must go. There," with another kiss. As she turned, and stepped upon the stile, he came and placed himself as if for her to mount, and seemed desirous of prolonging her stay.

"You have won," said the pleased and admiring Anne. "You gave him cakes and sugar and kisses. When Charles comes, what will he receive, I wonder?"

"Charles is a man," said the blushing girl.

"I wish I knew what you said to Dolphin," said Anne.

"Do you?" with color.

"I do believe he can trust you," said Anne.

"Do you?" was her reply to this also, and she went away, coy and shy. She was chary of saying, or admitting to another, what she had refused to her lover. She was conscientious, and thought she ought not to, till he had persuaded it from her lips, if he ever should.

Anne accompanied her part of the way, and promised to go and see her in a day or two.



## CHAPTER X.

## SARAH'S STORY.

As the young girl was left to herself, all the sad old things she had just heard of came back to her. Old as they were, and unknown to the newer generation, and forgotten by the older, they rested upon her with quite the effect of recent occurrences, — so helpless of righting if real wrong had been done, so almost hopeless of setting herself right in the regards of her lover, who had this old grievance to add to what she was sorely pained to think was a very grave cause for offence given by her. But then when he got away, he must see and feel that — and she stopped there.

She went directly to her brother John's house, found Sarah alone, who received her with more than the kindness which had for many months marked her conduct toward her. To her it was easy to see that the poor girl was unhappy. She kissed her tenderly, saying, "Tell me all about it;" and, seating herself on an ottoman at her sister's feet, she told her quite all now known to the reader, and gave her a clearer insight into her heart and feelings than is granted by these pages. From Sarah she received a full confirmation of the early history of the affairs between the Rosses and Waynes, dwelling as the narrator did on whatever tended to soften the conduct of Ross, sen., which, after all, was little relieved save by the intervening years.

And then she told her own story. "My husband knew it all, ere I consented to accept him. He has done what he might to prevent my forgetting it," she said.



"We all know him," said Portia, "but have only guessed at the life you have been obliged to live."

"Of that I have not a word to say. We knew the Waynes in our old home. We lived but a mile from them here. Forrester was about three years older than myself."

"Describe him, Sarah."

"He was very much like Charles in person. Not quite as tall, dark, while Charles is light, with a little stoop in the shoulders; handsomer in the face."

"Handsomer?"

"As dark in a man is more manly than fair, Portia. He was well read, with a quick, strong mind, not so polished, so gay, and so brilliant as Charles, and not so popular. He did not talk much, was thoughtful, brave hearted, and tender, but proud and sensitive — not jealous, but unyielding and unforgiving. I think Charles has greatly the advantage in these qualities."

"Well, we were much together, and found our greatest pleasure in each other's company. He devoted himself wholly to me, and I wished for no other. He had a hard, toilsome, thoughtful life, and the Waynes were poor, but always took care of themselves. Mrs. Wayne is a wonderful woman."

"Warren likes her very much," said Portia.

"Everybody does: you will, when you come to know her, Portia. We lived along this way several years. Their fortunes mended. He was twenty-five, and I nearly twenty-two. Nothing had ever been said between us; perhaps it was unnecessary."

"Did he never tell you that he loved you?"

"Never. I knew he did. He knew I loved him."

"That seems strange," said Portia.

"He was not like Charles, was he? It would have been



a great deal better had he been. But, had nothing happened, it would have gone on to a happy marriage. Your brother came back from Massachusetts a handsome, well-dressed, dashing man ; drove a stylish horse and carriage. I knew him quite well before he went East. He found me one day at the post-office, and carried me home. I thought nothing of it ; could not well have refused. I perhaps did not then remember the feud between the two families, and the Waynes were not people to lay up things. What I did not know, there was a personal quarrel between the young men of an old date. I told Forrester of my riding home with John. I saw it greatly incensed him, though he said little. He was very angry. I was surprised and hurt. I had ridden with others, and he seemed pleased. He expected I would receive ordinary civilities from others. I felt grieved at his unreasonable anger. Well, not long after, John came one Sunday and found me at Mr. White's — Jerry White's, my brother-in-law, you know. From there he walked home with me, and we found Forrester there. John went away, and Forrester remained. We then had some words. Forrester exhibited no temper ; but he spoke decidedly of John, and as I thought unjustly, and I told him so. He said very little more, and went away a little under a cloud. As he never talked of love to me, or ever kissed me, I could say little. I could do nothing but be cheerful and kind. The next day I went to White's, and talked the whole matter over. My mother was then dead, and Jerry was a warm friend of Forrester's ; and I had great trust in his judgment and that of my sister. They said that our affair was running on quite too long in its present shape. They thought we ought to be married — at least formally engaged.

“Of course they had no more idea or wish than had I of breaking with Mr. Wayne. Everybody was pleased



with him. I had decided to avoid John. They thought that it would be best to treat him as I did all other young men, and at the next complaint on Forrester's part, to say to him that I did not know what he wished or expected of me; that it was due to me and my friends that something be said. I do not recall it exactly. It did not seem possible for me to say any thing; I did not want to; I preferred to avoid John and live on; I was happy, and felt secure; they over-persuaded me. Well, in a day or two John drove round and asked me to ride with him, and I had to decide between their plan and my own. I went, and had as wretched a ride as could be. Spite of what I could with delicacy say, he drove me around past the Wayne house, and Forrester saw us. He made us a very polite bow, and we drove round home. I went then straight to White's, and talked the whole case over again. I was really frightened, sick, and agitated. An evening or two later, Forrester came over to see me: his manner was gentle and not unkind, and he looked as if he were ill. Oh! if I could have gone and knelt to him, and asked him to pardon me, for I felt stricken and guilty. He said he presumed that I did not ride round by his home for the purpose of having him see me, but that it was the wish of Mr. Ross to exhibit me to him.

“It was all true, but it roused my spirit. I replied that I knew of no reason why I should avoid riding on that road. He looked up a little surprised, but said that he had told me what he thought of Mr. Ross; that it pained him to have me receive attentions from him; that I had disregarded his wish, and that I, of course, must choose between them. I made the worst answer possible, I have no doubt. I was cool and strong. I was stung by his idea of my being exhibited. I asked him if he felt he had any claims on me. I would have added some-



thing more. The words sounded strangely in my own ears, and I hesitated a moment. He said he had not the slightest claim in the world on me; and if he had, on such a question he would withdraw it, and leave me free to act as I would. This was spoken very firmly. I was a good deal disconcerted. I was not prepared for a renunciation, or its offer. 'I have not known,' I said, 'just what you wished of me, or what you thought of our relations.' — 'There have been no formal words ever spoken between us,' he said: 'I never thought it necessary. I supposed it was understood. I presume I have, like some other men, in my vanity, taken things for granted when I ought not to. I see now that it all goes for nothing.' — 'How for nothing?' I asked. 'We have misunderstood each other all the time,' he added, 'or we have had no understanding at all: your conduct shows that.' He said he could not rival Mr. Ross for my favor. He had neither horses, carriages, fine clothes, wealth, nor jewels, as I well knew. He certainly would not be in the way of Mr. Ross's approach to me. It seemed that he could not be, if he wished. He had wished me not to receive his attentions, and I did receive them: I should not have let him go from me with those words. He said he had taken things for granted. Of course I knew what thing that was. I knew he loved me through every fibre of his strong, repressed nature. I could have relied fully on it. I could have taken his hand, and asked him to tell me all that was really in his heart; or I could have told him I had chosen long before. But his words about wealth were bitterly unkind, and I let him go without telling him how unjustly he estimated me."

"You surely saw him again?" said the pale, eager listener.

"Once."



“Only once? Oh!” expressive of anguish.

“Only once. I—I” — then a pause; “I will tell you of that. About midway between our house and White’s was then a schoolhouse, where our Mr. Sessions used to preach every fortnight. Forrester always came to the meeting, and always went home with me. He would step out a little west from the door, and stand apart. I would start forward to go home, when he would join me. He then remained to tea, and spent the evening with me. Well, the next Sunday he was there in the afternoon. Who else should come but your brother John? I was frightened with a sense of coming evil. I would have gone out and gone home, had I felt strong enough. When the service was over, I arose, weak and confused, and clung close to my sister. I saw Forrester awaiting me. I looked helplessly toward him. Why could he not have come to me? I should have fallen by the way, had I started toward him. I clung to my sister’s arm, and was carried off toward her house. I never have seen Forrester Wayne since.”

“O Sarah, Sarah! don’t say that; don’t say that; surely they went and brought him to you? You had friends who loved him? While”— She could not finish the sentence.

“Your brother joined us, and walked along with us. He walked into the house uninvited. I rushed to an inner room. He asked to see me, and I refused. After he left, my brother and sister went home with me. Of course Forrester was not there. A few days later Jerry White went to see him. I would have gone to him myself, had they permitted me. Why I did not has always been a mystery to me. White found him almost ill, and very wretched; explained to him how it arose; that I was agitated, heart-sick, and really unable to join



him at the church. He said, in substance, it was all very well. I had myself questioned his claims upon me; he had told me to choose between John and himself; that he awaited me at the usual place, — I turned away from him, and John walked off by my side. All this in the face of a hundred people. Had I asked my sister or brother to have gone home with me or to him, they would have done it. The thing was done, and that was the end of it; and it was. Weak and sick, I wrote him a letter, telling him my heart and sorrow, asking nothing; and my own father carried it to his mother's house. He had left, — gone no one then knew where, and it was brought back to me."

Portia had slidden from her seat to the floor, where, kneeling with her arm about her sister's waist, her wide eyes on the pale, drawn face, she listened to the last sentences with convulsed bosom.

"O God!" she cried. "Such things do happen, and there is no help for them nor for us;" and she laid her head in her sister's lap, and gave way to sobs of anguish.

Sarah, by this recall of these buried incidents of her heart history, though disturbed to the depths of her strong, womanly nature, bent soothingly over the sorely agitated maiden. "I should not have told you this: it only increases your doubt and unhappiness. You have not seemed to choose against Charles."

"Oh! I refused him my love; denied it to him; scorned him when he knelt to me!" she cried, sobbing.

"He is tenderer than his brother; and you don't ask me what became of Forrester?" said Sarah, wishing to recall her attention.

"No, I dare not. He sought another" —

"No. He was more faithful than I have seemed — he was never married," she said in a low, calm voice.

"Oh, I am so glad!" without a thought of Sarah at the instant.



“No: though his life has been solitary, he is a man widely known and loved; a man has resources. He did not return; and two years after, — well, I suppose White and my sister may have encouraged your brother, — a year later still and we were married.”

From her brother's the stricken girl in the twilight went to her mother's grave in the little burying-ground, where, laying her forehead on the grassy mound, she gave way in the abandonment of a motherless girl's grief. As she grew calm, from that altar she lifted her heart upward through the calm stars to the source of all light. Then she stole back to her home.

What Charles predicted came true. On its being known that he had gone away, on Mrs. Barber's authority, it was currently reported that Portia had rejected him, and many things were made to wear an air of confirmation. So sanguine was Mrs. Barber that the way was open to her favorite, that he again returned. Portia saw him but once, and then took refuge with Sarah, whose husband was absent, until Wilmot left the village.

It was said that John Ross, sen., expressed himself as surprised at his daughter's rejection of Charles, and decidedly disapproved of it; but he was rarely sober, and when sober showed the marks of decay.



## CHAPTER XI.

## EXPIATION.

WINTER came and passed; and the spring brought no word of the absent medical student, except a rumor that he was at Philadelphia. His friends, if they heard from him, were reticent.

The summer came with a new affliction of a peculiar form to the Barbers. Warren had gone steadily on during the winter and spring. Portia became more to him. Marks had somewhat supplied the place of Wayne as a friend and mentor, though no one would ever rival him in the boy's love. Sometimes he went up to see Godolphin, who proved too spirited for Stewart's personal use. His mother displayed the same manner toward him as during the months of Wayne's presence, doing what she might for his person and comfort; while his father made, for him, a considerable effort to win his regard, and even talked of purchasing an interest in the flourishing business of Marks & Co. for him. In May he was stricken with a violent fever, complicated with unknown cerebral difficulties, attended with delirium. He was taken at Marks's, and carried home. When his mother went into the room, and found him flushed with fever, and calling the name of Charles Wayne, she accepted it as a visitation of God upon herself for her sin toward that young man,—a sin to be expiated, not repented of. The blow smote the rock of her hard, strong nature, and the flood of a mother's tenderness flowed out to her stricken child as never before.



To Portia, to her husband, and the members of her family, she was a revelation, but remained still a mystery. The nearest physician was called, and Dr. Grant and another yet more remote and famous were sent for; and what might be was done. The woman changed in other ways. The labor of expiation was vigorously entered upon. She spent hours in intense prayer, — asked God to punish her in any other way; take property, life, all, only spare this child. She sought the prayers of her church and of the individual members; fasted; proud and fond of fine clothes, and still vain of her beauty, she arrayed herself in the coarsest and least attractive garments, and did what she might to mar her face and form; performed the most menial and offensive drudgery of the household. Her church and education offered few facilities for penance and mortification, but such as were within her reach she availed herself of vigorously. The fever was subdued, the cerebral complication remained; and as time wore on there was a threat of permanent mental debility, possible dementia. And so the case ran on through June and July into August; and the boy, reduced to a skeleton, would lie for hours with querulous moanings, or petulant complainings, or perfectly silent, with his vacant eyes in unchanging gaze, from which every ray of intelligence was absent. He continued to call for Charles, and never for his mother. In his quiet times, in the early part of his illness, he was fond of hearing Portia tell of Charles and Dolphin. He wanted Charles sent for. If he would come, he could cure him. He knew that he was now a doctor, and he often asked Dr. Grant about him. The attending physicians were all baffled. They gave the case up. Unquestionably the boy would die, and at no distant day. Should he recover, he would be an idiot, much the more grievous affliction.



His mother had reduced herself greatly. Thin and gaunt, hollow-eyed, hectic, and hopeless, there seemed nothing but to wear through God and his providence to the bitter, tragic end.

One morning, one of the last of August, Charles Wayne walked into the village, came down across from Stewart's, walked past the Barbers', and along up to Marks's. Several saw him from a distance, and had a bow or a nod. No one had expected him; but there he was, and never so much and so well himself. He did not look like a discarded lover, nor one who ran away. Curiously, the first person he met was old John Ross, and just as he reached Marks's store, who seemed pleased to see him; and almost immediately, as he generally did, the old man spoke of the old-time hunting incident in the big swamp.

"I always s'posed I killed that deer," he said; "and you always said I did, and there wa'n't anybody else by. They still talk to me and laugh about it," he said quite seriously.

"Of course you killed it, uncle John. It was lying very still when you shot into it, but I think you shortened its life a minute or two. You had the skin, you know, which is proof that you killed it," said the young man brightly.

"Well, well: I am glad to hear you say that, — glad to hear you say that, and glad to see you back again, Charles."

The young physician had heard of Warren's illness; had written and received a full history of the case from Dr. Grant; had made a study of it under the best lights in Philadelphia, where he was engaged in a hospital, and he returned, on Warren's account, a full month earlier than he had intended. He arrived the day before, stopped



at Stewart's, went home and spent the night with his mother, and went directly to Rossville the next morning. Of course Stewart was too prudent to return Dolphin to him on trust, nor did the young man ask it. He wanted to see Warren, and wondered how he would receive him. He was a little undecided how he should make his approach to Warren, — a matter, under the circumstances, to be considered. He was saved all trouble about that. He had not been ten minutes at Marks's when a hollow-eyed, worn, almost ghastly-looking woman, came into the store, whom, after a moment, he recognized as Mrs. Barber. The young man's compassion was excited for her at once. She seemed embarrassed, — he gave her his hand, and inquired about Warren. "He was no better — never could be. He wanted to see Mr. Wayne, and she came herself to ask him to go and see him." Of course he would go, and immediately went with her. "I have no hope," she said pitifully. "Whether he lives or dies, it is equally dreadful — unless help is to come from God through you. It is a judgment — God's curse on me." She uttered these words without bowing her head.

"Don't say that — don't say that! No one should judge God in that way. It sounds horrible to me that he should torture, destroy the life, mind, and soul of a child for any thing another could do."

"Don't you believe he does sometimes?" asked the woman eagerly.

"Never, never! Do you think a God infinite in wisdom to invent, infinite in mercy, could find no decent way to lead another to repent, or to punish them, if they had sinned? Oh, I would not think that! This thing has come upon Warren for no such purpose as that. Never! Never!"

She looked at him a little startled, and wondered if it could be as he so confidently declared.



“How do you suppose it was?” she asked.

“From natural causes wholly, Mrs. Barber. God’s hand is in no direct way in it. You may be assured of that.”

“Then — then he may be cured?”

“He may be.”

“And all this time you have been in a medical college?”

“I graduated early in March. I’ve been all the time engaged in a hospital, — ever since I reached Philadelphia.”

“And you think this would have come upon Warren if” — and she ceased suddenly.

“However it came, Mrs. Barber, it reached him wholly and entirely through natural causes. This is as certain as that the world stands. This is the sole hope of science and skill.”

“What a deep, secret compassion there is in his eyes and voice!” was the woman’s mental comment. She wondered if he looked and spoke like Him of far-off Galilee.

“Don’t you believe God ever punishes?” she asked, thinking of his reputed faith.

“Undoubtedly, but always in mercy. He leads by his goodness. He never drives by his wrath, never knows anger. My mother taught me these things.”

They gained the house. She led him in, conducted him to the door of the sick-room, toward which she pointed, and turned away to her own. The young man paused for an instant, to be certain of himself, pushed the door gently open and looked in. The sick boy lay mute and motionless, with his face a little from the light, his preternaturally large eyes vacant, unwinking, and fixed. His frame, under the light covering, seemed large and long. Near him, silent and motionless, sat Portia, with



her back to the door, intently observing the sick boy. If she heard the visitor's step, she supposed it to be that of an attendant, and gave it no heed. The young man entered, passed around the girl's left, and paused a yard from her side. Then she turned with the suddenness of surprise, her color receded, and then came back in a flood. For an instant she could not rise; and then with the one word "Charles!" low spoken, she arose and held out her hand, with a pitiful expression of face, which she turned toward Warren. "I am so glad you have come!" she said.

"For Warren, of course," was the young man's mental comment. But he was not there as a lover. He had thought all that over. He scarcely referred to Portia in his interview with Anne Stewart; and she told him nothing, save the report of his rejection. Now he took the proffered hand, and pressed it warmly. This was for Warren, in front of whom, and for a better view, he led the tremulous Portia, still holding and very warmly pressing the delicious little hand, which very much liked to be pressed in his, so large, cool, and firm, and made not the least effort to escape.

As they thus stood, a long, deeply-drawn breath by the young man was heard by the girl, who knew that was for Warren. Then he dropped her hand quite abruptly, and passed around partly, and nearer to the seemingly unconscious boy. Over him he bent as if to catch the sound of his breathing. His hand passed down along the extended arm on the bed till his finger rested on the languid pulse. Now he was fully in the gaze of the still agitated Portia, to whom he had never seemed so beautiful; untouched by the sun from long housing, more slender, as she thought, more assured, cool, composed, manly, bringing strength and hope to the sick-room. She was certain — she knew



—that this coming was not to her. She was more than surprised that her sister should herself go to him, and she felt, that, if help was to come, it would be through him. She was now certain that it had come. Surely he was one through whom God would gladly work. The young man bent over the boy and spoke his name softly, as Portia thought an angel might in the ear of the dead; and she wondered that it was not heeded. Again and again — “Warren, Warren!” without a sign of conscious hearing by the sick boy. As the young doctor stood looking at him, with a shade of disappointment on his face, as the girl thought — “Speak your own name to him,” she said.

“Charley Wayne!” An instant expression came to the eyes, which slowly turned, and as if listening. “Charley Wayne has come to you, Warren!” in a cheery voice.

The eyes came up, the face was turned, and the palid, shrunken lips repeated, “Charley Wayne!” faintly. As his eyes met and recognized the face, a feeble effort was made to put his arms up around the young man’s neck. Charles bowed, lifted the wasted form in his arms, and drew a hand and arm over his neck.

“Is Dolphin here?” asked the boy feebly.

“He is not far away,” answered the young man cheerily.

“Portia is here?” faintly.

“Yes, Portia is here.”

There was now a decided tremor in his voice, that Portia herself detected, and trembled as she did.

“I shall get well now,” in the scarcely heard voice, as he was laid back on the pillow which the girl, with tears dropping from her eyes, placed for his head.

“My mother is here too now,” he murmured from the pillow.



“Thank God!” said the youth, tears springing to his own eyes.

And then the mother came to the door, and paused, arrested by the tableau.



## CHAPTER XII.

## THE YOUNG M.D.

THE young M.D. became satisfied that the cerebral symptoms of the patient were due to much more remote causes than were indicated by the treatment, and permitted no more of the prescribed medicine to be given. All the day he sat watching and studying the case, caring for Warren wholly, bathing him, and preparing various appliances for his ease and comfort which his recent training and invention suggested. At night he took possession of the room, dispensed with all assistants, and made himself exclusive nurse.

At the end of twenty-four hours he was confirmed as to the treatment, and then administered a medicine brought with him.

In the afternoon of the next day Dr. Grant came, and a long consultation ensued. They did not agree ; but Dr. Grant regarded the case as utterly hopeless, and was too glad to be relieved of it, and young Wayne assumed the entire control of the patient.

I could not give a history of the case. For the next week the young man was not an hour absent. He was physician, nurse, and devoted elder brother, fertile in expedients, strong, full of pure young blood and life, with perfectly healthful nerves ; hopeful, self-reliant, he gave of his own spontaneous vitality. He became a tonic, an inspiration. The laying-on of his cool, firm hands, imparted vigor. His presence in the house was felt as the spring-



ing-up in it of a new, gentle, healthful magnetic force, bringing peace, courage, and hope. Laura Barber—humble, awed, fearing—found a sort of fascination in his presence, ministering as much to her turbid, trembling spirit almost as to the languishing, quite exhausted springs of vitality of her son. His return, the prompt resort of Laura to him, his going at once with her, his constant presence, the whispers of what he said and did, were the absorbing theme of Rossville gossip,—he the rejected lover of Portia.

Quite all the relatives, one after the other, even Mrs. Gray, were at the house, and saw for themselves, while all manner of rumors was afloat as to the effect of his treatment upon his patient. Portia was a constant attendant. While the young M.D. watched his charge, she took her note of the case from his face. Unchanged, a little anxious, it was on the eighth day she saw decided hope. She had detected gleams of it before; now it appeared with a fixed character,—hope in which was clear expectation.

“You feel certain now?” she asked.

“Very hopeful, not certain,” was the answer.

She could see the coming-back, the rekindling into a steady glow of the soul and intellect in the vacant, lustreless eyes, where they were but fitful before; more animation and nerve in the voice, something of interest in things beyond the one or two upon which he had not quite lost all grasp. Wayne drew for him, in crayon, a likeness of Dolphin, with which he was really pleased, and he began again to listen to stories, and showed petulance at things which had not annoyed him for months.

While the young physician watched his patient, watched in turn by Portia, both were in the watchful eyes of Laura Barber. It was necessary to her scheme of salvation that they become reconciled. To her they were little like lov-



ers. She saw, as she thought, a deeply veiled devotion in Portia, in Wayne only the kindliness and comradeship of the chief toward a trusted assistant and companion. There was little reserve on his part, — no sign of pride or anger, — and she detected no satisfactory indications of continuing love. He was only the thoughtful, determined, alert physician, who had undertaken a desperate case, and staked all on his success. This thing between them had in her mind become a part of her care, and she was anxious and doubtful.

One evening Portia entered the sick-room very quietly, as was her wont; and, as she approached the couch where the patient and doctor were, she caught the murmur of their voices.

“And you will take me with you?” asked Warren plaintively.

“Some time,” was the cheerful answer.

“And Dolphin too?”

“If we can manage it, Dolphin must go.”

“And Portia?” asked the persistent boy.

“Portia won’t want to go.” Rather sadly this was spoken.

“Why?”

“Hush!” and she stole away undiscovered.

And so they were planning their lives, and one thought she would not wish to share in them. On the whole, she was a good deal depressed by it. He had taken her at her word, after all.

So closely was the young man engaged for the first two weeks, that he did not go away as far as Stewart’s; and on the tenth or eleventh day Anne, who had been there, came in, accompanied by Mrs. Wayne. Mrs. Wayne had never been in the house before, and her coming produced a sensation. Tall, slender, with a sweet, soft, handsome face,



and her old trim widow's cap, she came in with her pleasant, graceful manner. Mrs. Barber met her at the door, and conducted her to the room where the young doctor and his patient were. Warren was quite bright, knew her, and showed pleasure at her coming. Of course, the call was for them.

As they rose to go, Charles went a little in advance of his mother, followed by Mrs. Stewart. Mrs. Wayne, ere she passed out, went to Portia, gave her her hand, and bending kissed the girl's cheek with the air of benediction. As such the child received it, and it shed over her heart and spirit a restful assurance of peace and blessedness. What occurred was not seen by the young man; but the color in the cheeks and the light of the eyes of the maiden showed him later that something unusual and very pleasant had happened to her.

At the beginning of the third week of the young M.D.'s return, when he became quite certain of the recovery of his patient, and others began to share his hope, a thing occurred in the neighborhood which drew attention very widely to him. The Markses had been married for nearly three years, and the young wife was called for the first time to meet the perils of maternity. Slight and frail, some apprehension more than usual had been felt by her physician and friends as to the result. Something more than his worst fears were likely to be realized. Another was called to his aid, and finally Dr. Grant was summoned. It was an abnormal case rarely arising, and beyond their united experience. It was decided that the child must be sacrificed. That was delayed in the complications of the case until it was supposed that both must perish. The mute outside world only knows that mystery and death impends, the details of which cannot be known, nor can the precious sufferer have the sympathy and sustaining



presence, save of the initiated few. Mrs. Marks was a beautiful and gifted woman, quite idolized; and the peril she was under cast a gloom over the village, and as far as heard of. Men and women went silent and sadly around, and young maidens had that instinctive sympathy and dread which could appeal only to their sex in its fullest force. It was finally rumored that there was little hope, then that there was none; and as an early September night set in, dark and rainy, it was said that the poor woman would not live to see the light of another day.

When the morning of that day came with sunshine and bright sky, the joyful intelligence ran through the village that the child, a beautiful boy, was alive, with very hearty lungs, and the poor dear mother was in a most hopeful condition. There was all manner of rumors in circulation, yet all concurring that finally young Dr. Wayne had been called in, and that the result was entirely due to him; and in a certain way he became a hero, more so, in the eyes and feelings of the dozen thoughtful matrons who were present, than if he had borne the invalid mother and infant from a burning house or sinking ship. It certainly was very pleasant and not ungrateful to him, the admiration and homage paid him in the coming days. Young maidens blushed as they met him, and showed a shy, half worship in his presence. They felt that he should not have been there, but were so glad that he was. Mrs. Gray was present at Marks's; and during the forenoon of that day she went to her sister's, Mrs. Barber's, full to flooding with the affair. There the two sisters had a memorable conversation.

"We were all there," said the outspoken Mrs. Gray, "and we know all about it. It was just as I tell you. They had some high words, and when they came out Dr. Wayne took the case into his own hands. Those old-fogy



doctors may say what they will. They were going to let them both die ; and they would have died, had it not been for him. Marks wanted him called two days before. That young man was sent here of God, if a young man ever was. Oh, how blind we have all been ! blind and sinful, I fear, too," she said with a sigh. " Well, for me I give it all up," she said resignedly.

" I gave it up the moment I knew he had come," said Laura. " I think he was sent to me of God. How strange, and he a Wayne ! and I was so blind, and hard of heart, that I rejected him as the Jews did. I would hardly consent that Warren should be snatched from the burning by him."

" And he is a Unitarian, if he's any thing," said Mrs. Gray. " His mother is."

" And then Warren was smitten, and would have died, or lived a drivelling idiot ; and he came, and is saving him again. The child is certain to recover if God continues to bless," said Laura.

" Have you told them all — confessed all to them ?" asked Mrs. Gray.

" No, I have not," said Laura, distressed and dismayed.

" Hadn't you better now, and make it sure ? Perhaps God is only permitting this thing to seem well, to try you ; and if he finds that you continue to harden your heart — you know what he did to the Egyptians."

" I don't harden my heart to him," abjectly.

" But you do not do your whole duty to men."

" How can I, just now ?"

" Have you got Miss Bronson's statement that she wrote at the time ?"

" Yes, of course."

" Well ?"



“You see, sister Gray, I am waiting for something to happen between them, and then I will go down on my knees to them.”

“What is the prospect with the poor, dear things? Do you know, I was never so anxious about my own Laura as I am about those two. I am afraid, somehow, for Portia. Does he say any thing to her?”

“Not a word, special. I don’t know what to think about it. Sometimes I think, and then again I don’t know. If he really has ceased to love her” — with a look to finish the speech.

“Perhaps that is where the judgment is to come in, Laura.”

“Oh! I am half converted to Dr. Wayne’s views of God and his ways. He says he never crushed an innocent person to punish a guilty one. That he leads to repentance by his goodness, and never drives sinners to it in wrath. I have thought a world of that, and have tried to open my heart to his goodness.”

“Maybe you are right. No knowing but that this young man could teach us all. What does Portia really think of him?”

“You know, she is the shyest in her nature. She don’t let herself more than half into her own secret. Not that she is secretive, but it is that virgin coyness of hiding her love. Of course she worships him, and always has. You know he has high, upish notions of honor. He thinks she don’t love him. She quarrelled with him. We are all his enemies, and of course he is here only as a physician, not as a lover, or even friend, and he feels that he must walk pretty straight. I think he loves her. He told her he did, I think, though she has confided nothing to me. I think she has to Sarah, and I think he is one to be steady in his love. It is in his nature to be. You know Forrester never got married.”



“Funny, ain’t it, that we two are now ready to plot for this young man whom we plotted against?” said Mrs. Gray.

“It is the strangest thing — when I see how God has led us in this thing! If only something would happen between them it would all come right,” said Laura with a sigh.

“There will. There always does. How strange that thing of his mother being here, and going and kissing Portia, as if it were to be! Something will happen, you may depend upon it,” were Mrs. Gray’s final words.

Dr. Wayne had been called to two or three patients in the neighborhood; and the morning of this same day he went to see one near his mother’s, and returned, a little after noon, to find himself famous in Rossville. As he came into Warren’s room, Portia met him.

“How proud and happy you should be!” she said to him ingenuously. “No, not proud, but very happy, and thankful, and grateful, that you have done this precious thing:” her eyes were a little suffused.

“Oh!” laughing, “that was not much, and it is a thing a young lady can know nothing about,” bending his eyes on her.

“A girl has a right to be glad and grateful,” turning her face away, and dropping her eyes.

Had Laura Barber seen the look the young man gave her then, she would have felt quite certain that something would happen, and there did.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE RETURN OF GODOLPHIN, AND WHAT HE BROUGHT HIS MASTER.

ON the second morning after the occurrences last related, a stable-boy from Brown's came into Barber's, and told the young M.D. that his horse Dolphin was at the stable for him. Of course it greatly surprised him. He stepped over to the hotel barn; and sure enough there he was, ready caparisoned with an elegant new saddle covered with cloth, bridle, martingale, all complete. Brown said that Stewart sent him down to him. The young man was thunderstruck. The horse was evidently intended for him; but that Stewart should trust him out of his own hand, especially that he should invest a considerable sum in the needless elegance of his outfit, was amazing. But there was the horse, evidently proud of his bravery, so neatly toned to perfect taste, and so becoming the beautiful creature. Wayne went back. He could hardly repress his emotion. No one had ever rendered him a substantial favor before. Of course this was an advance to him, but the manner of it, and in this form, greatly moved him. When he told Warren that Godolphin was in Brown's stable, Mrs. Barber and Portia were present. In spite of him his voice had a tremor, and he walked suddenly to a window.

"Dolph at Brown's? Oh, I am so glad!" cried the boy, quite starting. His mother went to raise him up.

"Yes," said his friend. "Stewart sent him down



this morning, they say. He has a beautiful saddle covered with blue cloth, russet leather bridle and martingale ; and the strangest of it all is, that Stewart should send him to me. There is a mistake or a miracle about it," he said, laughing.

"And so we have got Dolph back, Portia," said the pleased boy ; but Portia had stepped out of the room.

When he seemed to hesitate as to what he should do, Mrs. Barber, who was greatly pleased with his good fortune, said there was nothing for him to do but receive the horse, say nothing about the way it came to him, and let the thing reveal itself. He needed him, and would soon be able to pay Stewart, who knew what he was about. This was on the whole satisfactory. Her husband, learning of his fortune, offered him a stall in his own stable for Dolphin.

"Leave him at Brown's," said the woman decidedly, "where he will be well cared for. Dr. Wayne must not have the fragrance of the stable on him."

"I shall be well enough to take care of him in a week or two ; sha'n't I, Doctor ?" asked Warren, with more strength of voice than he had before shown.

"Be patient, Warren, and you shall care for him before long," was the cheery reply.

The incident was an event in Rossville. It ran along the street, and in an hour was known to every person in the village. It was even told to sweet, pale, hopeful Mrs. Marks, who expressed her gratification over it ; and Marks said that she was hesitating between Adolphus and Wayne as names for her boy. She might take them both. Dolph was nearly two years older than when he first exhibited his young master's horsemanship to the admiring villagers ; but he had led a life of enforced idleness, and when Charles mounted him this morning for a ride and a call or



two, the beginnings of a considerable list, the noble fellow, in the exultation of his own life, and perhaps conscious that he felt the weight of his only master once more, could hardly keep himself on the ground, and went off down the street in a series of demi-vaults, showing himself and rider to the best advantage.

In the afternoon he went around to Stewart's, and found that gentleman in very good spirits, but reticent, and rather mysterious about Godolphin.

"Well, now, Doctor, you just ride your horse and take the good of him," was what he said.

"But how can I, Stewart?"

"How can you? Well, I don't believe I could, and there are a good many who would not dare try; but you were born to ride him."

"Yes. But I don't own him."

"Well, I don't know who the devil does, then. I don't. I haven't a dollar in him; not but that you are all right, but I shouldn't have invested in that saddle, you bet."

"I thought it was funny," added the young man.

"Not so funny either. I should have done it for you as soon as for anybody, but none of us ride such saddles. No, Doc, you have other friends who can afford it, and who just now would import an Arabian for you. Had you saved my wife, and brought me a boy, Lord bless my soul! I don't know what I would not have done, though I should not have invested in that saddle. You don't need that, though you look well in it."

Here was a new idea.

That evening he went to Marks, who admitted that he knew something of the matter, but that he could not now tell him a word about it; that in time, perhaps, it would reveal itself to him; that he had more friends than he



suspected. The horse was his, and he could not very well help himself. Charles went away a little hurt; and, meeting his friend Theodore Ross, the young men talked the matter over a little, and Wayne manifested a good deal of a very young man's anxiety, and said something of leaving the horse at Brown's on account of his unknown owners. Young Ross was at his aunt Laura's the next morning, and spoke of Wayne's perplexity in Warren's room, which was now quite common to the relatives of the family, and where a good many things had been talked over, without reference to him, who still seemed oblivious of most of them. Soon after his departure, Wayne himself came in.

"I can tell you who sent Dolphin to you," spoke up the hitherto silent Warren.

"You can? Who was it?" demanded the young man.

"Portia. — Didn't she, mamma?"

Had an angel appeared, a greater surprise would not have been produced in the young M.D. The young lady fled. The young man stood an instant paralyzed, and turned a face almost pallid to the boy's mother, and read the confirmation of his assertion.

"For God's sake!" said the terrified woman, whose first thought was instinctively for her sister, as she went to him and laid her hand on his arm, "for God's sake, think how awful this is to her, to be betrayed to you in this way! I do believe you love her with your whole heart. If you do, go to her, put your arms about her, and tell her you love her. This is the time to do it."

"Where is she?" asked the young man, who needed no inspiration, looking around the room with the light breaking like new day over his face.

Without a word Laura conducted him up the stairs, and in the sort of a vestibule at the top, silently led him to a door, upon which she tapped, opened, pushed him in,



closed it, and stood there a minute ; and then, as if grasping herself, and with a new, strange light in her eyes, she went rapidly away.

The young man found himself in a spacious and very neatly furnished room ; but Portia was not there. On the opposite side was a door, leading to an inner room, ajar ; to this he hurried, and pushed it gently open. It was the sleeping-room of the precious one, who had seated herself on her bed, turned and buried her face in a pillow, which she had drawn up so as to completely cover it, and where she was sobbing as if her heart would break. The anguish and shame that thus her love had been betrayed, when it was not sought, was for the time overwhelming. The young man sprang forward, knelt by her, gently placed an arm about her waist, crying to her in a deeply-moved voice, “ O Portia ! don’t, don’t ! You will break my heart ! Sweet, dearest, precious, you know I love you with my whole heart and soul ! I always have, and never so tenderly, so devotedly as now.”

No mortal maiden but would stay her grief to hear such words. Her sobbing subsided ; and a hand left the pillow, and sought the one which pressed her waist, under and into which it insinuated itself, and permitted itself to be pressed very warmly.

“ Bless you ! bless you ! You do love me some, dearest ! ”

And then that little head was transferred from the senseless pillow to the manly shoulder, and the other arm came up about a neck, and the tear-stained, blushing face with the ripe lips nestled into a very love of a silky light-brown whisker, and was blessed, and pressed, and caressed yet more — an exceedingly good preliminary arrangement.

“ You do love me, Portia — say that you do, sweet



love," as his lips tried to turn to those that were hiding, and thrilled by the crisp whisker; and then they turned, and permitted themselves to be met and pressed as such lips should be, and two loves, two lives, were united, and then —

"Do you forgive me, Charles?" in a little voice, still from the shoulder.

"Do you love me, Portia?"

"You know I do. Do you forgive me?"

"For what, precious?" forgetting that he could have cause of offence.

"For my bad conduct, for the awful things I said to you."

"It was pretty bad, precious, and you would not give me one word of hope or comfort to carry away with me."

"Oh, oh, oh!" and the sobs came.

"I do forgive you from my inmost heart. There, dearest, don't."

"I did not believe that wicked, wicked story. You must have known I did not. I was so afraid you would see how easy it was to gain me," smothering these words in the whisker.

"And you made it so hard and cruel. Why couldn't you give me love for love, Portia?"

"I have, I do," shutting her eyes, and leaving her mouth exposed, when she breathed again. — "It was not so very bad, my getting Dolphin for you, was it?"

"Bless you, it was the most precious, generous thing you could do, dearest; for it came from your love. When did you think of it?"

"Oh! long ago," lifting her warm face. "Marks managed it for me."

"Marks! I knew he had much to do with it."

"And you will accept him from me, Charles?"



“Accept him! Do I not take love and life from you? And do you accept me, dearest?”

“I always hoped to be your wife, Charles,” with eyes and face down, and the little hand was now pulled round to his lips as thanking it for itself.

“What a wonder, Warren’s speaking of it!” she said. “And I thought I should fall.”

“How came he to know of it, dearest?”

“I told Laura of it in his room three days ago, never dreaming he took the least notice of it.”

“It shows how strong and healthy he is; and, love, you must never mind his saying it. You are rather glad, are you not, now, though it came hard on you?”

“Are you glad, Charles?”

“Glad? What a question! How should I have found out! Besides, I am so glad to owe it to him.”

“And so am I,” said Portia artlessly. “But you would have come to me, — would have said something to me, Charles? You have been so cool and indifferent.”

“Have I? What could I be, dearest? I came back expressly to care for Warren. Could I make that a mere excuse? Of course I should have approached you again — so as to be certain.”

“Did you not think, down deep in your heart, that I — I loved you?”

“How could I, after your words last fall?”

Then he arose, and Portia stood by his side, and they turned to the partly closed door, just outside of which stood Laura, her face bathed in tears, and expressive of the greatest anguish.

The instant she saw she was discovered, she ran forward; and, before they were aware of her purpose, threw herself on the floor at their feet.

“Mrs. Barber, I pray, I implore!” cried the young man, taking her by the arms, and attempting to raise her.



“Laura, Laura!” cried Portia.

“I will not rise,” cried the woman, “till I have told my tale, and been forgiven or cursed: I have sinned against God and you two innocents, and here will I lie; I have made my peace with God — have tried to, so far as I could, without making my peace with you. No, no,” resisting them, “here will I remain.” Then producing a folded paper, she handed it to Charles, who ran his eye over the two or three closely written pages, at the end of which was the name of Mary Bronson.

“Read it, read it!” cried the woman. He handed it to Portia; and, in reply to her question of what it was, Laura only answered, “Read it, read it out!”

The girl began; and with many exclamations of surprise, and some of anger on her part, and surprise and laughter from Charles, she read the paper through. It was Miss Bronson’s detailed statement of the occurrences between Mr. Wayne and herself on the night of their memorable walk, and substantially as the reader knows them. Portia drew a long breath of relief, with a glance of worship to her lover’s face.

“Is this true, Charles?” she asked.

“Quite true to the letter, I fear,” laughing.

“And you forgive me?” asked the girl.

“Most cordially; and so glad for the chance.”

“How came you by this?” to Laura, with a flash.

“I always had it — from the day of its date.”

“Oh, you bad, bad Laura! What did — what could you mean, and leave me to — Oh-h-h!”

“Hear me, and you will have little doubt what I meant. I framed the whole conduct of Mary Bronson that night, — laid out the whole plan.”

“You awful Laura! Oh, oh, oh!”

“I knew, if she asked it, you would send Mr. Wayne



home with her. She was to slander you to him [‘Oh, oh, oh!’ from Portia], and detain him away from you. On her return, she wrote this out. I studied it, and instructed her what to say to you. You both know better than I what followed between you. What I worked, planned, and lied for, succeeded. You two were separated.”

“Laura,” said the now calmly angry Portia, pale and rigid, with compressed lips, “what could have been the cause of this dreadful conduct? What had he done to you?”

“I hated Charles Wayne.”

“Hated him! O Laura! that old bad, bad — Oh!” —

“My father had injured him and his, and I hated him. He was good and noble and generous. He loved you, and you loved him. I had never known happy love. He rescued Warren, my own child, whom I had not half loved; and so I plotted. I found a weak tool, whom I hired and persuaded” — She paused. “Then God smote me in the mother’s heart that had begun to grow in me, and I would expiate my sin. I prayed, fasted, groaned, wore sackcloth, put ashes on my head, half repented. My malice went out of me, and my hatred died. I would do any thing but own my wrong to you, and repair it if I might. And then Charles came back. I was willing to humble myself before the world, earn the favor of God if I might, by half works, and I went to him. He came, as I knew he would. On that morning he told me God never punished by destroying the innocent; that he led to repentance by mercy, and did not force to it by wrath. I half believed this. The more I pondered it, the more I believed it. I acted on it. Warren would recover, and from man my crime might be hidden. I would win my own starved, wretched salvation by penance and expiation secretly to God. As Warren began to mend, the good-



ness of God for the first time arose like a new light on the darkness, the utter wretchedness, of my heart. The grand nobleness of this young man, his tenderness and purity, your gentleness and goodness, Portia, all led me; the mercies of God led me to full penitence, and then I planned and hoped to have happen between you two what has happened. Then I would come to you in humble confession. Me, an old woman, would go on my knees, as I have and do, to you two. The anguish, the horror, the fear, shame, and darkness of these months, are to go for nothing, nothing. Rags and filth are they all, bringing no atonement, no peace, scarcely a hope."

Then she threw her face into her hands, with her splendid hair, streaked with gray, falling over them, and burst into sobs.

"Mrs. Barber! Laura!" cried Charles, kneeling by her side, and laying a hand on her own tenderly, "those whom God afflicts are sacred to me. For whatever of wrong in act or intent you have done me, from my soul I freely forgive you. This is the nature and teaching of my mother, and such is her faith in the nature and love of the God she adores."

Portia was overwhelmed and distraught with astonishment, horror, and the conflict of the various and strong emotions struggling for the possession of her bosom.

"Oh, one moment ago I was so happy! the world was full of love and light and God, and now there comes to overwhelm us all the darkness, the curse" —

"No, no, love; not the curse. Surely you do not mean that. The heart that has borne this has suffered under it. Your sister, your almost mother, asks you now, in the first hour of our perfect love, to help pluck this bitterness away, and dispel this darkness."

The girl stood one instant, and then cast herself upon



the bosom of the repentant woman. "My sister, my mother, we all need mercy and forgiveness. Mine I give you. O Laura!"

Then the woman arose. "You," to Charles, "are the good angel of our house. Thank God for the day you came among us;—and Portia, bless God that he has given you his love and trust. I dare not bless you."

Then they turned, and went back to Warren. He seemed to have fallen into a slight drowse, from which their presence awoke him. He looked wide-eyed from one to the other. Something of the peace and serenity, the hope and happiness, in the faces of the lovers, struck him. "Charles, Portia, mother—have we all died, and are we all in heaven?" he asked.

"In heaven? Almost. What an idea! What made you think so?" asked Portia.

"You look so beautiful and sweet, and so does Charles, and mother has it too now."

"We are to make a heaven here," said Charles very brightly.

"And we owe it all to Charles; don't we, Warren dear," said his mother, kissing him tenderly.

"And, mother, you have it too," he repeated, looking into her face. "You look like Portia now."

Then the lovers kissed him.

"I know certainly now I am going to get well; and Charles, Portia will go with us now," he said.

Then Portia related the little incident of having heard their words on that evening.

"And Charles said you would not want to go with us."

"And I did all the time," she answered.

"And I meant to ask you some time," said Warren.

"So you see the way was to be opened for us," Portia said archly to Charles.



“And mother may go now; can’t she, Charles?” asked the boy.

“Yes, she will go with us now. We shall all go together.”

The disclosures of Laura were an awful revelation to the young lovers. Even Charles had only heard of the probabilities of such conduct, and that in books. To the sweet and gentle Portia, they opened up rifts to depths and darkness in the human heart undreamed of; and this was her sister Laura, whose beauty she used to be proud of, with whom she had lived all her life, who reared her, whom she loved more as a mother than a sister. Were such things possible? Had she germs of them in her own nature? This sister had been converted, was a member of the church, and in her heart, below that fair, rounded woman’s bosom, were hidden this hate and malice. But it was purged now: the inexorable hand of God had led and held her till she had voluntarily confessed. She had observed a change growing and deepening from the first of Warren’s mysterious illness. At first a rigid exactitude in the performance of what she called her duties, more exacting and sharply defined as the case grew more hopeless. Her dealing with her own person, her fastings, vigils, and the coarse arraying of herself, were, as she thought, the results of her mother’s care, love, and overstrained, long-continued anxiety. Love had finally come into her heart and soul,—love of God, love of her offspring, as she had never felt it before, and peace had come to her, to them all; only there was the form of that father groping in the ways of sin and degradation. Even Charles could not reach him, she feared. All these things, which flashed on the quick mind of the girl, ran and shaped themselves, without seeming effort on her part, as they do in the brains of women, and all the time



she went, in a serene, deep, sweet peace in heart and soul, about the room of Warren.

No wonder the poor boy asked if it were heaven, nor that he saw a change in his mother's face. All the hard, sharp lines had gone out of it. The fixed, sad, hopeless, worn look, with the contraction between the brows, had gone, and quietly and humbly she busied herself about her woman's offices.

Some days would elapse before, in the atmosphere of the house, all traces of the purifying storm would be effaced; yet both women felt that their lives toward each other were set in the new channels of love and confidence. Something indefinable, the certain existence of which the younger had never been assured of, had passed forever away. Silently, in Laura's presence, she placed the statement of Mary Bronson in the fire, kept burning in Warren's room since the autumn days began. Both watched it light up till it turned to white ashes, and then their eyes met in reconciliation and love.

"It was to be," said Laura; "and, thank God! it finally came through him. O Portia! my almost perfect sister, even you are hardly worthy of him. Perhaps the best woman is not the equal of the best man. And he has never experienced a change of heart."

"That is not Charles's theory," answered Portia to the first part of Laura's speech. "He thinks that women are inherently better and higher than men."

"It may be," answered Laura sadly. "I was formed baser, and lived lower."

"My sister-mother!" said Portia, casting her arms about the humble woman's neck, and kissing her.

"Bless you, bless you, Portia! I wanted to feel your arms and kiss to know that I am to remain in your love."

Yes, she was one of them, was to go with them; but



not all at once and wholly did the better angels rule her heart and life. The shadow of the conflict hung about her. The hard, guileful elements of her nature were not eradicated nor at once changed. War was long waged with them. The deep lines of character and conduct were not at once effaced ; they never are. The reformation of a life, the radical change of the heart, its impulses and affections, is a labor of watchful, faithful years ; and the building-up of new life, a new character, a renewed nature, never was and never will be the work of an hour, under any supposed influences. All this Laura found and experienced to be true. With such strength and grace as she found in the firmness and force of the tenacious nature, the qualities she inherited, persistently directed to the redemption of herself, she succeeded finally ; and peace and trust and hope, the love of others, all came to be hers. In her soul she thought she owed this to Charles Wayne, whom, in a far-off, shadowy way, she fancied resembled Him to whom she was led ; and it shocked her to think this resemblance existed, although the man, as she feared, was still in a state of nature. Poor woman !



## CHAPTER XIV.

AFTER. — THINGS NOT LEFT WHOLLY TO THE READER'S IMAGINATION, AS THEY GENERALLY ARE.

THE young doctor had a call or two to make ; and he left the house almost at once, after his last words to Warren, " We shall all go together."

" You won't be gone very long?" said Portia, who followed him to the door.

" Gone long?" and he bent back low to her blushing lips. " I should think not so very long," and he galloped off, smiling brightly. And she went back to think, and to her little scene with Laura. If, in the glory, the exhilaration, of this morning, a thought of Laura Barber came to Wayne, it projected no shadow into his day. It was but a nightmarish memory of a bad dream of the night that was past. His nature was joyous. Paradise opened about him. He had no wish to restrain Dolphin, save within the limits of prudence to the generous-spirited horse himself. He extended his ride to his mother's house. She must know of it.

" I saw all how it would be," his mother said to him. " I might have preferred a daughter from another house. I am more than content with her, Charles ; and it is a good end to all."

" And so you knew, mother dear? Didn't you also know how precious a word of comfort would have been to me?" And he bent, and kissed her lips.

" And you are glad now you did not get it from me?"



You are wiser than Forrester was," she said a little sadly.

Of course he called at Anne's gate on his way back to Portia.

"Oh! you have found out about Dolphin," she cried, as he rode up, going out to him. "I see it in your face."

"And some other things," he answered gayly.

"Yes, I see it all; but the other things were an open secret to everybody. And, Charles, I suspect it was her hand that sent you this horse. I thought so all the time. On my heart and soul I am glad of it if she did. It shows there is some real genuine good stuff in her, if she is a Ross."

"As much as can be in one woman," he said; "no doubt of that."

"Of course, of course, and you are in a hurry to go back to her. And I shall have you up here now: the walk is such a paradise for lovers, and you two owe it to me."

A pair of wide gray eyes watched his return. He alit at Brown's, threw his bridle-reins to a stable man, and his eager glance toward the Barber mansion. A heart fluttered. Surely she might go to meet him. Was he not now hers,—hers by right of love, by his own pledge, by her acceptance? She opened the door, ventured on the step. A motion of his hand, and she ran down as he opened the front gate. Half Rossville saw her. What did she care? He called to her; and with what a blessed sense of proprietorship she turned and put her hand within his arm, the humid light in her veiled eyes, the warm blood mantling her cheek.

"May I always come?"

"May I always come?" mimicking her little voice. "What a question! Always ask your blessed little heart," with a look that kept her eyes down.



Slowly they walked up the broad flower-bordered way, as he told of his ride, and then he inquired of Warren.

“Oh, he is so strong and fresh!”

“And Laura?”

“She is cheerful and at peace. Only think, love as — as” — and she stopped.

“We know it, dearest,” he added.

“Was never hers. Her nature was strong. She was never more than half a Christian, I fear, and she lived in half night,” she said.

“Even her children brought little to her,” he added.

“Oh! you must go and see our baby over at Marks’s,” vivaciously.

“Can I go with you?”

“Certainly, in a day or two.”

As they stood by the door, — “Aunt Gray is here. She and Laura were by themselves; and they have wept and cried, and then aunt came and kissed me, and will be real good to you. Do you know, I never heard of the old trouble till you went away,” she said.

“I supposed you had not. Let us not be unhappy over the past, love,” he answered.

They found Mrs. Gray in Warren’s room. She came directly to Charles, saying, “I was your enemy: I want to be your friend. I know every thing. You must let me love you as my youngest brother, who is to be the pet.”

“I am very glad,” he said warmly. “It is so much sweeter to be loved.” And he bent, and kissed her withered cheek.

Soon after, good-hearted, homely aunt Dorcas came in to congratulate and rejoice with them all.

They had the old-fashioned dinner late that day; and then the young people were quite to themselves for two



or three hours, with Warren, when Charles told one of his old stories, into which he wove a tale of happy love. When the sun was running downward in the shortening day, Warren consented that they might go for a walk, — a good long walk on the west side of the river. They went out over the bridge, up the hill, and into Sarah's, just to let her see and rejoice in their happiness. The summer's warm blood was on the silver-leaved maples, and streaks here and there dyed the deeper foliage of the sugar-trees, while gold and russet, and all the shades of brown, were in the hickories, the tulip poplars, and beeches. The cheery notes of the meadow-larks came up from the fields, and the short trills of the bluebirds down from the hazy sky, plaintive with the sorrow of their approaching departure from all the pleasant places. To try to note the words, the trills, and ecstasies of the lovers, would be as difficult as to gather up and preserve the brightness of the fading day, and the splendors of the dying year. They went to Stewart's, and Anne gave them tea. She observed that Portia made conscientious efforts to eat her bread and butter, as the more decorous and conventional woman will at such times ; while Charles recklessly abandoned himself to the happy inspirations of his exultant soul, and gave utterance to the gay, bright things which effervesced and broke upon his lips, as the bubbles of light and color on a brimming goblet of champagne.

On their way back, Portia, in the tenderness of her full heart, which felt akin to sorrow, told him the story of Sarah. She feared that there was resting in his mind, in that of his mother and brothers, an unjust impression toward her.

“It was an awful blow to the tenderest, truest heart that ever throbbed. Forrester supposed she loved him as much as was in her nature,” said Charles.



“What was it, then, Charles?”

“He thought her heart wavered, that she was drawn by the glitter and show of your brother: she did marry him, and he decked her in chains and jewelry. My brother set his life to the memory of a lost love. Had she remained as true, he would, in time, have returned to her. We always thought that she was greatly influenced by White and his sister,” was his summing up of the case.

“What would you have done in your brother’s place, Charles?”

“I would have carried her off from forty John Rosses if she had a spark of love for me,” with a laugh.

As they were about to part for the night, and stood with clasped hands, —

“What a wonderful day this has been!” said Portia.

“What dearest, what strange things, have happened! I must think them all over, and separate, and set them apart. Some I will lay away.”

“Ever so far away, and forget them, love,” said Charles.

“And forget them. Some I shall hide away in my heart as too precious for the day, and some I shall keep bright for constant use to cheer me when you are away,” she said.

“What a practical little philosopher you are,” said he, touching her lips. “Which will be the most precious one, I wonder.”

“They are many; I can’t tell just now,” in the tenderest of voices.

“When we first joined our lips?”

“Perhaps so,” with mounting color. “Don’t ask just now.”

“Which will you cherish most?”

“Oh! when you first came to me, and put your arm about me, so generously to save me from myself,” warmly.



“Which are the most blessed of all?”

“All the minutes since then. When you were with me, and when you were away; for then I had so much to think of.”

And then they parted for the night.

What full, brimming days were those! What holy, serene twilight evenings and nights! There was ample leisure for solitary walks, communions, conversations and readings, and the coming to know each other better in their growing love.

To Charles, Portia was a perpetual study, as one petal after another of the ever unfolding, never fully-blown bud of her love shyly developed itself to him, revealing a new tint, giving out a new and delicate fragrance of the hidden heart of passion, of the full strength and fervor of which she was herself unconscious.

Warren was not forgotten. With the deepening autumn, day by day his strength and vigor increased. He finally could see from a window Charles on Dolphin, who lifted his proud head up under and almost into his master's face. Then he went out and rode after him, was placed on him, and finally could mount him alone.

And there was the recovering young mother, and that wonderful boy-baby! Never up to that time had there been such a one to the mother, or to Portia. Next — no not next, but somewhat in the same line with her lover — the young girl ranked that soft, pulpy baby.

She would be married in the spring, when the birds and buds and flowers came. And her sisters wondered that Charles, a woman's ideal of a lover, would consent to such delay. “It can never come to her but once,” he said, “her maiden love, her devoted lover. She shall have her fullest day of it, and her way with it. All our lives will remain after, and am I not now as happy as I deserve? Why should I wish to squander all my treasures?”



Wiser than most men in his generous forbearance ! Of course the day was named, and came long ago, but I am to leave the lovers with the charm and romance of young love fresh upon them, living through the celestial intervening hours and days, while yet they may have the reader's sympathy and tender interest with them. I prefer they should remain with the halo of his fancy around them, where they may remain in the brightness of young lovers perpetually.

I turn back, and review my own first chapter. I close my eyes ; and the solitary beautiful picture comes back to me as I last saw it, — the slow moving river, flecked with sunshine, and bearing the golden autumn leaves ; the embowering trees ; the roofs and gleams of the white walls of the three or four houses, under the sun of early Indian summer, lovely and lonely ; all there is of Rossville, where once flourished the House of Ross.



# THE STOWES OF AUBURN.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE HORNS OF HABAKKUK.

THE colonists of the Western Reserve were many of them men of strong personal peculiarities. Some enterprise, courage, and will were essential to carry men six hundred miles, a land journey, one-half of which was into an interminable wilderness. Once there, a full development and exercise of those qualities, with thrift and endurance, were necessary to existence; while a removal of the restraints and requirements of the social life of the oldest States, and the absolute freedom of the Western wilderness, tended to bring into play and harden into character all the strongest qualities and tendencies of individuals, which in older communities are repressed, and where men present a monotonous and unpicturesque uniformity of life, and mode of thought. All new communities abound in the variety and contrast of character, the eccentricities and peculiarities so attractive to the artist. The first and second generations of the descendants of the Puritans in the Ohio woods were rich in specimens, having individualities more or less distinctly marked. Though a native of the oldest New-England State, I was



carried from it at an age so early that the commonwealth which gave me birth could have suffered little by that event. My earliest recollections are of a period toward the close of the first quarter of the present century, and fresh with the life and its incidents of that very primitive and now seemingly remote time, and of a generation of men whose peculiarities only became apparent to me as a rapidly developed and ripened society rendered them obvious and brought them out. I recall them, as I do that large and strongly-marked, old-fashioned New-England type of head and face, as something almost extinct in the later generations.

Of these men almost the first whom I can recall was a man by the name of Stowe, "Old Stowe" as he was called. Indeed, I don't know that he ever had any other name. He was old, always must have been, — so old, when I remember to have seen him first, that he had reached his full capacity of growing old, and never did grow any older, though he lived until I reached manhood. It was of him that an irreverent youth said that "he would never die, but would be taken off on foot." A slight, shrunken, little old man, always in old, rusty black fearfully bespattered in front with tobacco-juice, with an immense bell-crowned hat big enough to hold him, suspended over him by his ears, and canted back so that it rested on the coat-collar, thus enabling him to secure an uncertain lookout in front. The face was always pallid and withered, eyes always rheumy, and the voice cracked and thin; yet a man of mark he was in his day, a man of wealth for his time, and a man of will, as well as shrewdness.

Like so many men of an older time, and some of his own, he devoted every possible moment of his later years to a study of the Bible and to interminable disputations



upon its texts, and especially of the occult subject of the prophecies. I can conjure him before me now, coming out from his sleeping-room early in the morning, and sitting down to draw up his old-fashioned long hose, "a world too wide for his shrunk shanks," when some text of Isaiah or Ezekiel would strike his mind and arrest the less important matter of dressing, which might not be resumed, unless the day should prove unfavorable for biblical exposition or controversy. The old man was the terror of all the orthodox preachers of that day and region, who usually avoided him as they would one of the beasts of Daniel. Fortunately the infirmity of age did not permit his poaching at any great distance from home; and he was compelled to limit his depredations to his own immediate neighborhood, where he grimly sat, Bible in hand, like a little old spider confined to the small circle of a home web.

He had, however, one unfailing resource, his one earthly stay, — Uncle Ben Woodin, a short, crooked, heavy-shouldered, wry-necked, curmudgeonly old man, with an immense head, and shaggy brow overhanging his little, sleep-sunken gray eyes, one of which was blind, or had such a cast that it would have been of no use to anybody else. Uncle Ben was the product of many crabbed and acrid elements, never able to agree in any thing, and each contributing its utmost to furnish forth a human being who should not at any time, under any circumstances, ever agree with any other person concerning any thing whatever. Less fortunate in life than Old Stowe, unsocial, tart and taciturn, shrewd and cunning, but often irritable, and thrown off his guard, he, too, was a hard student of the elder Scriptures, spending days in close study, in some dim nook or corner, working out a train or chain of scriptural thought and argument. Of the two, Stowe was the more fluent and cooler-tempered, and he usually made the



onset. Woodin may have been the deeper or more cunning, and generally stood sulkily on the defensive. This enabled him to be always adverse. To have been in accord with any man would have been fatal to him. Old Stowe used to say of him that he would never go to heaven if there was any other place he could get to, and not unless, like a worm, he could bore a small, crooked hole of his own in through the wall. Both were illiterate men. Neither had seen a biblical commentary, or knew any thing of any book but the Bible. Many were the battles royal of these doughty champions, wherever, whenever, and however they met, in field, forest, or wayside. At a raising, logging-bee, or corn-husking, without greeting or preliminary word, the war opened, raged, and was waged, until some fortuitous incident beyond their control separated them for the time. Hour after hour the thin, cracked voice of Old Stowe, "scattering the loose expectoration of his speech" with innumerable hard texts, and the low, dry, husky mumble of Old Ben in reply, were heard breaking off where they began, and joining battle as they might at the next encounter. Sometimes the asperities of Uncle Ben's temper produced and provoked some sharp words, giving a momentary personal turn to the chronic war, though no permanent alienation followed. Indeed, they were quite too necessary to each other's happiness to become enemies. There was once a difference and a notable lawsuit between them; but the exigencies of the theological war brought them together again, though it was thought that Uncle Ben, who was worsted in the suit, was always a little sore. When irritated, he sometimes found relief in calling his adversary "An old Univarsalar;" and Old Stowe had been known to retort upon him the epithet, "A hell Redemptor;" names which may have indicated some phase



of their respective creeds, to those who understood the terms.

A day came, however, when the adverse hosts met, memorable for the obstinacy of the fight, and the unhappy consequences which followed, and which influenced, and to some extent produced, the events of the tale I am to tell.

Old Stowe had a pleasant residence on the summit of a gentle swell, about a mile south of the Newbury line, on the old north and south state road, in Auburn. A bit of finely preserved forest sheltered its northern and western exposures; while east its outlook was wide, almost grand, over the Cuyahoga Valley; while southerly there was a moderate descent for two or three miles through one of the loveliest stretches of country in all that beautiful region. At Auburn Corners, a thriving little vill a mile and a half south, lived Uncle Ben Woodin. It was well on in June, in the morning of an exquisite day, a long, bright day of sun, blue sky, and breeze, such as comes nowhere on this earth now, that these grim old warriors met by mutual design as well as mutual accident, though seeking each other. It was the summer that an elder brother, the colonel, was, with a party of young carpenters, building a very spacious house for one of the younger Stowes (Alvirus) at some distance south from the old man's residence. It seems that these battered veterans had not met for some weeks, and on this morning Old Stowe shouldered up his big Bible, and trudged off valiantly down the road towards the Corners in quest of his foe; and, as the prophets would have it, Uncle Ben had at an earlier hour sallied forth, and was actually charging manfully up hill, Scriptures in hand, to storm Old Stowe's fortress; and they met in the highway just above where the boys were at work on the new building,



busy time there were few journeyers on that road, and the and without waste of time they fell to. In that far-off fierce disputants had but now and then a solitary auditor. Some lonely wanderer on that summer day, struck with the spectacle of those two old men fiercely pelting each other with rugged names, and scraps from the dark sayings of the rapt old bards of the elder Scriptures, under that June sun, would pause in surprise, listen in wonder, go on, linger, look back, and resume his journey. What they said, what texts they quoted, what doctrines were advanced, what arguments were presented or points disputed or settled, was never reported. They were all the livelong day under the eyes, and only just out of the hearing, of four amused young spectators. There was a little butternut-tree that made a scant shade, and a bit of a decayed log in a corner of the crooked fence, the place of their encounter. Sometimes they sat together and read from their Bibles; sometimes one sat while the other harangued him orderly, and sometimes both were standing vociferating at each other at the same time with great heat, when the scoffing young reprobates would catch the sharp pipes of Old Stowe, and the raised, gruff growl of Old Woodin, contending for the mastery in sound.

When the young Mrs. Stowe's dinner was ready, at exact twelve, she went out and proposed an armistice, and invited the champions to dine. They hardly seemed aware of her presence, and never came to know the object of her interference. All the long afternoon the war went on, and towards nightfall the parties were evidently urging it with undiminished ardor. Indeed, it was beginning to take a personal turn; and, the day being done, the colonel, with one or two of the young men, went out to the battlefield.

When they approached within hearing, Uncle Ben was



applying some of the names of the apocalyptic visions to his adversary, and accused him of producing some very unwarrantable evidence on the trial of the old lawsuit. Old Stowe probably saw the approach of the young men, and was disposed to be a little facetious, as he sometimes was.

“Uncle Ben, I have a question to ask,” he said in his thin, crackling voice.

“Ask it then,” growled old Ben’s bass.

“Why am I like Paul at Ephesus?”

“Why are you like Paul at Ephesus? You ain’t.”

“Because, after the manner o’ men, I’m war’en with a beast. Ha, ha, ha!” in broken quavers.

“You ole seven-headed, ten-horned Univarsalar,” cried old Ben, raising his Bible in both hands, and advancing as if to lay his enemy with it. “The Scripters move us in sundry places,” he cried.

“Uncle Ben,” said the colonel, stepping forward, and taking hold of the impending Word with one hand, “I wouldn’t let him have it that way. It may be more striking, but I don’t think it is so convincing.”

“Why carnal, is that you? Here I’ve been all day tryin’ to make Ole’ Stowe understand about Habakkuk’s horns comin’ out on his hand, — tenth varse, chapter third, — and he’s as obstinate as a mule.”

“Well, Uncle Ben, if Habakkuk was a horned animal, he would be too much for me,” laughingly the colonel answered.

“Why, now, see here, carnal,” —

“It means God’s power,” interrupted Stowe. “God’s power on airth.”

“I won’t talk with such an ole fool,” said Uncle Ben, turning away, and walking a few steps; then, going suddenly back, he approached his opponent, and said, —



“I s’pose you think that that Dave Wilson o’ yours will git our Milley, don’t you?” when he turned, and without another word, or waiting for any reply, shuffled off down the road towards home.



## CHAPTER II.

## SHOWS WHAT CAME OF IT.

THAT was the summer set apart in my boyish memory as sacred to Ama Moore, —sweet Ama Moore, as lovely, mirthful, hearty, blue-eyed, blonde beauty as ever bewitched the fancy of a dreamy boy of nineteen. She was then but sixteen, mature in form, which was round, supple, strong, with the fresh roses and wine of youth, and the faint throbs of maturing womanhood just beginning to disturb her heart, and send its color to her cheek. In this world is there any thing sweeter or purer than the untouched liking of an innocent youth and maiden who are drawn to each other without knowing or caring why? She was the hired girl of the younger Alvirus Stowe, when hired girl and man were the equals of master and mistress in the perfect social democracy that ruled that day. It is curious, psychologically, what immense interest such a youth and maiden can find in going to meetings when they go together, especially of evenings, and particularly if the way is lonely, and leads through a small wood. Three-quarters of a mile east of Stowe's was a region known as the Valley, formed by the Bridge Creek on its way to the more remote Cuyahoga. It was a fertile and beautiful tract of small extent, and picturesque even with stumpy fields, log buildings, and rude breaks in the wonderful forest that still covered it. A population had rushed into it from a part of York State (as New York was called) contiguous to Pennsylvania, and had brought



in all sorts of German names with an element not New England. There were many of the enthusiastic Protestant Methodists, and in a chronic religious ferment. They had built an immense log building as a place of worship, known to the ungodly by various ribald names. A large, rude, illy-lighted temple it was, by day or night; and the meetings held there not unfrequently attracted the irreverent young men for many miles around. There was no unusual excitement attending the gatherings of that summer; but the charm of companionship which drew two into its circle made us quite punctual in attendance upon the Sunday evening services at this tabernacle, though with what spiritual advantage to us I cannot say.

On the Sunday evening following the memorable encounter described above, Milley Woodin, as she was called, came up to go with us over to the Valley meeting. She was but distantly related to the Woodins on her mother's side, who, dying in Milley's infancy, left her to the care of old Mrs. Woodin, an excellent, long-suffering woman, who was mother and grandmother to her. She was a great friend of Ama, though two years older, quite a mature, marriageable age for young women of that time. As unlike Ama in person was she as could well be, tall and slender, a brunette, with splendid dark eyes, and quite a favorite. It was supposed to be an understood thing between her and young Wilson in the Stowe neighborhood. Dave had been in some sort brought up by the elder Stowe; and when he became of age had received a hundred dollars, a yoke of steers, and a young colt. He was now about twenty-four, a bright, spirited, good-looking, intelligent young farmer, skilled with the axe and rifle, and an expert in breaking a colt, or taming a wild steer. He continued in the old man's service since his arrival at age, and had invested his earnings in the pur-



chase of a fine tract of nearly wild land in the west part of Auburn.

Dave managed to be informed of the movements of Milley, and was at the meeting soon after we reached it. We had noticed that Milley was a little pensive all the evening, just a shade not herself. As we left the meeting-house Dave joined us, intending to become the particular escort of Milley, who, as we supposed, would go home to Uncle Ben's. She met Wilson very coldly, and was not inclined to separate herself from us, or permit him to approach her in any direct way. Her conduct, so new and strange, surprised and then irritated the young fellow. "What was the reason? what had he done that she treated him in that way?" As Milley walked with us, we had to hear what was said between them.

"Mr. Wilson," she answered very coldly, "it is right you should know that Grandfather Woodin has forbidden my being in your company. You cannot come to our house, nor can I see you." It was said not very graciously.

"The old" —

"David, you are not to say one word against him. I'll not hear it!" with spirit, interrupting him.

"Well, I think it darned hard."

"I don't care if you do: you sha'n't say a word against him." They walked on in silence. At length, —

"Milley, may I talk with you a little alone?" very subdued.

"I cannot permit that," ungraciously.

"Are you not old enough to think and act for yourself, Milley? And is it very much that I am asking of you?"

"I am thinking and acting for myself now, David."

"My God, Milley! do you mean this, with all that has been between us?"



"I have never understood that there was any thing between us any more than between any young man and woman. We've been pleasant acquaintances enough; nothing more, on my part."

"O Milley! can this be true? It was all the world to me. You were more than all the world to me," very much distressed.

"I don't think you'd break your heart, Dave," with cold indifference.

"After what you have just said to me, Milley, I don't believe I shall," bitterly.

"Then you ought to be glad I told you."

"I am."

"There is another thing, Mr. Wilson. There is a story about you, as you know. It has come to me again, and is true." This was with a little feeling.

"The story of my being drunk? And who told that to you now?"

"One who knows."

"John Graham. Of course it was him, — the liar!"

"You had better say that to him, Mr. Wilson: if you cared for my good opinion, you would disprove the story."

"I don't know as I particularly care for your good opinion, Miss Woodin, or Mrs. Graham, or whatever name you may choose. If I ever had it, you would not have listened to this stuff against me." This was said with the air of one who had made up his mind.

There was no answer to this; and we walked on in silence until we passed the woods, and came into the open field back of Alvirus Stowe's house, forty or fifty rods distant from it.

"Good-evening" to Ama, "good-evening" to me, "*good-by*" to Milley said Wilson (the last quite emphatic); and he strode off across the fields, a nearer way



for his home ; and his rapidly receding figure was soon lost in the warm June night.

Not a word was said between us after Dave left us. When we reached the house, the girls entered, and I went into the little pantry, standing outside for a bit of cake and cheese and a bowl of milk. A young man at nineteen is seldom so angry or sad for another as to forget his lunch after a walk and a short fast. Mrs. Stowe had left a light burning in the small room for me, and a moment after Ama came in also. I saw by her face that she was a good deal moved.

“What do you think of it?” I asked.

“I think Dave Wilson is a fool to get mad at a word, and go off so. He’s a fool!”

“And I think Milley Woodin is a good deal worse than a fool,” I answered in sharp anger.

“What does a boy know about these things?” she replied with a superb disdain — the woman!

The little pantry was suddenly too small for me ; and I strode out without a word, but with a very grand air. I had not gone many steps before a little ripple of light footsteps, laughter, and rustling draperies came after me.

“Are you going off mad too?”

“What else can you expect from a *boy*?” without stopping, or turning my head.

“Good-night,” she said very sweetly and a little sadly.

No response, and I entered the new house where my quarters were. Oh, dear ! it is one of the first, if not the bitterest, of a young man’s pains, when he discovers that the girl of his fancy has become a woman while he remains a boy, and she makes him believe that she has found it out also. I had in some way been made aware of this fact before, when I had seen the young girl surrounded by real young men of twenty-six, who treated her with the



respectful admiration of an assured woman, when my blonde face was almost as smooth as her own.

Milley Woodin went home before breakfast the next morning. Almost the first thing I heard, through the open windows of the but partially enclosed house, was the snatches of a song from Ama, with little gushes of heart-felt laughter as she went in and out from pantry to kitchen about her work ; but the sting was in my heart, if such a thing was then developed ; and, besides, Ama was on the side of Milley, and justified her outrageous treatment of Dave Wilson ; and when I saw her bandying light words with my seniors, and seemingly without a thought of me, a sort of boyish resentment came in, to arm at the least my manner with indifference.

Ama told Mrs. Stowe of what occurred between Dave and Milley, and she applied to me for my version, and from both of us got a very correct idea of it. It made quite an impression on all the circle of the Stowes with whom the young people were favorites, and was regarded as putting an end to any supposed match between them. At the same time it placed Milley in a light which much lessened the regret on Wilson's account, who was too proud and spirited, as was supposed, to suffer very deeply or long. None of them were much surprised at Old Ben's course, which provoked several sharp quotations of Scripture from the elder Stowe.

Ama's mother lived below the Corners, and she went home the Saturday evening following ; and the next Sunday evening Ama, Milley, and Miss Craft, a tall, showy girl, daughter of Uncle Bill Craft, went up the Valley road together. Auburn at that time could produce nothing fairer, and the three were a sensation that night at the crowded meeting-house. It was a beautiful moonlit night ; and after the services the three girls, in their white



robes, were the centre of a longing, admiring group of young men, conspicuous among whom was John Graham. Dave and I were there, but under a cloud, — he really, and I affectedly, — and we stood apart. The sight of John greatly incensed Wilson, who was at first determined to go and give him the lie in his teeth in the presence of his faithless loved one; but I had somehow mastered the civilized idea that the presence of the young ladies consecrated the place to the gentle purposes of peace, and I was able to restrain him. The young ladies lingered many minutes, and for what reason was a mystery; when it occurred to me that Ama, perhaps, was to return to Stowe's that evening, and might wish my escort, as it would be much out of the way for her friends to go home by that way. I was confirmed in this by her standing a little apart from her companions, as if to make my approach easy. I had acted about as foolishly as boys do, all the week, furnishing the amplest justification of her scornful fling at me; and I am sorry to say that my first impulse was to walk away from her, and I did turn to go. A bitter and better impulse controlled me; and I turned and approached her, and asked, "Do you intend to return to Mrs. Stowe's this evening?"

"I did," she answered.

"Permit me to ask if your friends are to go with you; or is any one to attend you?"

"I am afraid not," laughing.

"If you will intrust yourself to a *boy*, I will with pleasure keep the owls from scaring you," I said.

"Thank you. I hardly have a choice; and, if it would not trouble you too much, I will accept your offer."

I did not make much. With a good-evening to her friends, she put her hand very frankly in my arm, when, bowing to them, we turned away. As we did so, Mr.



Graham started off by the side of Milley, and Ed Rice attended Miss Craft. As we walked away, Ama clasped my arm with both hands, giving it a little shake.

“You bad, bad boy! you are just as bad as you can be. You know that you and the colonel are the only ones Mrs. Stowe will let me go with; and she said she would send you over for me to-night, but I almost had to ask you, — ain’t you ashamed? And what has ailed you all the week? You’ve been as glum as a Turk. Milley didn’t give you the mitten. How queer you are! And what did you mean just now by saying, if I would trust myself to a boy?”

“You told me the other night that I was a boy, and didn’t know any thing about such things,” I answered coldly.

“And you didn’t like it?” laughing with real mirthfulness. “Ain’t you a boy? What do you know about it?”

“I am a boy. I don’t know any thing; while you are a woman, and know much about such things.” I felt sad and bitter.

“You are really hurt,” she said very tenderly; “and I still don’t see why. If you are a boy, I am three years younger, and am only a very silly girl. I don’t understand it.”

“Ama, when a girl, at no matter what age, comes to be a woman, she is admired and sought by men. She can no longer care for a boy,” still very sad.

“I never thought of that: none but a *man* would,” was her intuitive answer. She remained silent for many minutes. Wilson had gone on ahead of us; and we entered the dense maple-wood, under which lay the profoundest shadow, with the silver urns of moonbeams poured through openings in the foliage here and there,



and which were still lodging, slipping, and falling from leaf and bough to the ground below, filling the dark, silent wood with fantastic forms as of spirits gliding noiselessly through solemn shadow, and hiding away or disappearing. Something of the weird, phantom-haunted hour seemed to strike the consciousness of the child-woman, who clung to my arm, and pressed close to my side, throwing for a little way quick glances into the wood, and then bowing her head, and walking on, as if with closed eyes; while something in her manner perhaps communicated an impression as if for her the wood was haunted. When we emerged into the open pasture-land, she breathed as if relieved.

“Oh, I am so glad! I never felt so before! I will never, never go through that wood again in the night. Never!” Her voice had a tremor to it.

“I did not keep you from being frightened?” I said.

“The wood is haunted! Let us hasten from it,” she answered, quickening her step till we had passed over the ridge that threw the night-black wood below us. But she did not fully recover her old wonted gayety, in the room of which there was a tender, timid trustfulness that was very sweet to me. It was as if she said, “You see, if I am a woman, I recognize and cling to you as a man.”



## CHAPTER III.

WHEREIN DAVE WILSON FOLLOWED MILLEY'S ADVICE.

JUNE warmed into July, and July kindled to beaming August, which cooled to grateful September. In all the new grounds where forests had been felled in the winter and spring before, to be sown in wheat in the fall "choppings," as they were called, the brush had been burned off in a grand conflagration, faintly typical of a final burning; groups of three or four swart and grimy loggers were busy with a yoke of oxen in piling up the blackened trunks of trees in innumerable heaps to be consumed by fire; others were already dissolving in that element, with here and there a tender, going with his lever or poker, appearing and disappearing in the smoke, as with active hands he adjusted the burning wood so as to secure its most rapid consumption; and the whole landscape was darkened with the smoke.

In early September a new-comer into the valley had a raising to roll up the body of a log-cabin, which the settlers on the wild lands still built. It had from the earliest days been a sacred and pleasant duty to assist at the erection of these structures; and though as the country filled up the pleasure had diminished, the duty remained. The process of erection was of the simplest and most rudimental. A collection of sections of the trunks of trees of uniform size and length, as the dimensions of the structure might require, were hauled near the site, and placed equal numbers upon the four sides of the intended



cabin, with a cleared place in the centre which it was to occupy. Two logs were placed on the ground, the beginning of two of the walls. At their ends, with a woodman's axe, a "saddle," as it was called, was formed on the top of each. A log was next placed transversely at the ends of these, notched to fit the saddles, and turned down, thus forming the two other walls. These in turn were saddled, and so on until the walls were carried to the requisite height. The only approach to mechanical skill requisite in these primitive structures was in the use of the axe — an implement and weapon to which the American republic owes more than to any other known to its history. With an expert axeman for each corner, and a dozen strong-handed farmers, woodmen and loggers to roll up the logs, which was done on long, strong skids, the heavy work of a cabin was usually performed in two or three hours.

On the present occasion Dave Wilson, the only man from his neighborhood, was present with his axe, and took a corner with his usual skill. He observed John Graham on the ground — whom he had not seen since the memorable night at the log church — with a number of his personal friends. Dave, as was his usual way, went about his work, and, with hardly a word to any one, pursued it with such skill that there was no delay for him. He drank no whiskey, as was the general custom on such occasions. The walls were raised, and the roof "cobbled out," as it was called, before sundown, when Dave descended from the building, and, placing his axe against a stump, he made his way to where John, with something of his usual swagger, was telling a story to a little knot of admirers. Dave waited till he had finished, when, confronting him, he said in a cold, firm voice, and defiant manner: "John Graham, you are a liar!" and, pausing a moment



in the silence, he added, "You have gone sneaking about like a coward, among women and girls, and told a lie on me."

"Dave Wilson," said the startled Graham, "what's that you say?"

"I say you are a liar. You know what that means, don't you?" very offensively.

"Who says I lie?" a little bewildered.

"I do!" with marked emphasis.

The usually cool blood of the York-state men who heard this began to move, — in John apparently the wrong way.

"He called you a liar," said Ed Rice with contempt to John. "Eat him up: you're big enough to."

"What's that you say?" said the younger Keyes, a powerful young man, to Wilson, pushing his way into the front of Dave. "I don't allow any man to call a friend of mine a liar. I take that up."

"I say he's a liar," said Dave, turning fiercely to the intruder, and gathering himself up like a panther for a spring.

"Hold on there!" shouted Lance Craft, one of the most powerful and dangerous men on the Reserve, of his day, and then in his prime, leaping forward. "Bill, what do you mean?" seizing Keyes by the shoulder, pulling him back. "This is none o' your quarrel. Form a ring and see fair play, boys. An' the man o' you who interferes will have to deal with me. Make a ring." Everybody within hearing had now gathered about the principal parties, leaving space enough about them for the contest.

"Thank you, Lance," said Wilson with a sort of dignity. "There is no use for a ring. I say to his face that he's a liar, and I'll answer to him here or anywhere else, any time."



“What’s all this about, boys?” asked Uncle Neat Hall, who now came around from the other side of the new building with some energy, followed by the preacher.

“What’s goin’ on here? — Brother Craft,” to Lance, “I’m ashamed o’ you, encouragin’ the boys to fight here in this gospel light. — John Graham,” he said, taking the discomfited youth by the arm, “go with me, and I’arn to fight the good fight. You somehow don’t seem anxious to fight carnally.” Uncle Neat was sometimes a little sarcastic for a Christian.

“No, that he hain’t, Brother Hall. The good fight, as you call it, is much more to his taste,” said Lance, with immense disgust.

“Brother Craft, I’m ashamed o’ you,” said Uncle Neat good-humoredly, leading John away with an air that left it in doubt to those who knew him whether his exhortations to John were not ironical.

“All right,” answered Lance. “Blessed are the peace-makers! Take him off, so he sha’n’t hurt nobody.” Which was received with a laugh of derision. “Dave, give me your hand: you’re a Christian after my own heart. By George, boys, it takes some pluck to come over here alone and give a feller the lie in that style! An’ if any trouble comes o’ this, count Lance Craft on Dave’s side. Boys, do you hear that?”

Dave again thanked him, and, shouldering his axe, started leisurely off across the fields and woods for home. This little incident made a good deal of talk. It had somehow come to be known that Milley had jilted Dave, and some said for John Graham, while others that it was on account of stories told by John; in substance, that, while he and Dave were hunting deer on the Cuyahoga, with a jack by torchlight, Dave got so drunk that he fell out of the boat, and would have drowned had it not been



for John. All agreed that John was mixed up in it; and a good many wished that Dave had thrashed him, unpopular as that method of redressing grievances always was in that locality, even at that day.

John was not much affected by this incident, notwithstanding his seeming lack of pluck: and it was said that his standing with Milley was as good as ever; but then, as people said, there is no accounting for the tastes of girls, which is true. And his friends claimed that Dave's only injury was that John had "cut him out;" that was Dave's cause of war; and that John would have flogged him in a minute had it not been for mixing Milley's name up in the quarrel; an idea which, from its very strangeness to that set, made it acceptable to some. And this was the light that John attempted to make it appear in to Milley herself, who doubtless appreciated it.

Matters went on till the early winter, when an event occurred which deepened the interest now hanging about the names of these young people, and caused them to be much more widely heard of and talked about. It was during the earliest of one of the "good hunting-snows" of the season, so anxiously waited for and so eagerly improved by the deer-stalkers of that day, — "still-hunting," as they called it. John Graham, while chopping in the woods somewhat remote from the clearings, was shot at, as was said, while standing on a log in a moment's cessation of labor, the bullet passing through one corner of a checked linen handkerchief, tied about his head in place of his hat. The wind of the bullet, as he claimed, knocked him nearly off the log. The next day Dave Wilson was arrested by a constable and posse, on a warrant sworn out by John on a charge of shooting at with intent to murder him; and Dave was taken off before old Squire Joe Nash in Troy for trial. Nothing of this kind had



ever occurred in that region before; and it produced a wide excitement, and hundreds of men and boys hurried to hear the trial. Graham was the principal witness. He swore that Dave passed through the woods in sight a few minutes before the gun was fired; that he heard the report, found himself swaying off the log, and felt a shock as of a blow in the side of his head, and was quite deafened by a sharp sound; that, on recovering, he took the handkerchief from his head, and found where the bullet had passed through the corner of it, which hung just over one ear. He produced the handkerchief with the hole in it, arranged in the form in which he wore it, put it on, and showed just how near his head the bullet must have passed. He had his suspicions of Dave, went out to where he saw him pass, took his track, and followed it to where he stopped and apparently fired off his gun; for sprinkled about on the snow were grains of powder where he had reloaded his rifle, which was in the exact range of the report of the gun. He was corroborated by others as to the probable presence of Wilson in that neighborhood at about the time of the alleged shooting, followed by an unfair statement of what occurred between the parties at the raising, to prove malice on Dave's part. No evidence was produced for the defence.

The young lawyer who defended Dave put John under a sharp cross-examination, and made him appear quite absurd and ridiculous; but Dave was held to appear before the court of common pleas for the county of Geauga, in the sum of a thousand dollars, which old Stowe, who was on hand, very promptly gave. This had brought the matter between the young men to a pretty sharp issue. Dave, stung by Milley's words, had followed her advice, and said to John that he was a liar; and this was the present state of what followed.



John's friends were sharp, bitter, and confident, though not numerous; Dave's, bold, scoffing, and defiant; while a good many not in the quarrel looked knowingly and kept silent when the shooting was named.

"Old Stowe," with innumerable wraps, mufflers, great-coats, and overshoes, went off to Painesville and retained Reuben Hitchcock and Benjamim Bissel, two eminent lawyers of that time, for the defence; while he and old Ben Woodin were at open feud, maintaining an armed silence, in fact.

"Them are horns of Habakkuk is too much for 'im," was the complacent remark of Uncle Ben, in reference to Old Stowe.

I left that region and sweet Ama Moore in September, cut nearly all the avocations of a farmer-boy, and coquetted no more with carpentry. I dropped off from rifles and the woods, relinquished quite permanently boats, fishing, and Punderson's pond, gave up reading poetry and pretty much the writing of verses. I had begun seriously to contemplate the problem of my own life, and was very busy with the Latin grammer, the cube root, and Euclid, under the stimulating tutorship of Dr. Ludlow.

Away along in February he returned one day from a consultation, in the lower part of Auburn, over the case of Ama Moore. He said she could not recover, and wanted to see me. I forget under what strange name the doctors hid their knowledge of what ailed her. I had seen her but once since I returned home to my mother, in September; but in autumn I heard that she had been ill, but was recovering. The next day after the doctor's return, I started over a fine snow track to walk the twelve or fifteen miles to see her. I found her in a neat little room, on a low, white-curtained bed, with her mother by her, faded,



shrunken, yet sweeter and lovelier, if possible, than in her heyday of beauty and health. She put out her two little thin hands to me, lately so plump and brown, closed her eyes, and remained silent for a moment, while the tears escaped from the closed lids, and there was a tremor of the pale lips.

"I am so glad you came! I wanted so much to see you."

"I only heard of your illness last night, Ama, and I started this morning. I should have come before had I known of your danger."

"I know you would. All the ones I love have been to see me but you; and the only thing I asked of Dr. Ludlow was to tell you." Then followed some talk about her illness. "Do you remember the night—the last night we went up together from the Valley to Mr. Stowe's?"

"Very well."

"Do you remember what you said to me just before we entered the woods? I had a warning that night. You had been cold to me, and I asked you why; and you said that I had become a woman, while you were yet a boy; and I thought to myself that you were three years older than I, and, if our liking should grow with us, that when I was twenty, you would be twenty-three; and I could be very happy in waiting, if you liked me, and—then it all grew dark. Every thing stopped. I was never to be twenty. It was all to end very soon; and the woods were full of spirits and ghosts, who seemed to wrap themselves in the bright bits of moonlight, as in winding sheets and shrouds, and to flit and float about among the trees. I was chilled and frightened. I closed my eyes, and clung to your arm till I felt the light through my eyelids and knew we were out. That was my warning."

"I remember it very well. I thought then that you



closed your eyes ; and you said, as we came out, the wood was haunted."

"We never went there since," she said. "I would never go through that wood again, even in the day-time. I am not afraid of it now. I've seen all the spirits in my dreams since. They are sweet and lovely, and I shall be with them soon. It was very hard for me at first to give every thing up." And then some very tender and impressive words for me, as coming from the portals of the Unseen. I was much more affected than was she.

"What a lovely summer this was ! I am very glad to have lived it, and I am very glad that I met you. I like you very much, and differently from what I do anybody else," she said very sweetly. .

She was very weak ; and I had been with her to near the close of the day, talking little short, detached talks. Her mother, I saw, wanted I should leave her. I was going four or five miles farther through the Mantua woods, to my old home at the Harmon's. I promised, that, at the farthest, I would return on the second day after. As I arose to go, she put up her hands.

"Kiss me this once : you never did. My mother is here. It is right." I put my lips to hers, leaving my tears on her wan face. With a man's choking sensation in my throat, I went silently away.

On my return next day, about three in the afternoon, the house was filled with tender women and girls, who had just dressed her for the grave. She died an hour after I left her. I saw her in her stainless robes, and was permitted to place in her hand on her bosom a little woven spray of white roses and buds that Sarah Harmon cut from her winter trees, and made up for me to carry to her.



## CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH THE HORN OF THE WICKED IS PUT DOWN, AS  
THE READER EXPECTS.

At the March term of the court, Dave was indicted for shooting at John Graham with intent to kill. All the witnesses on both sides were in attendance; and great excitement prevailed through the adjoining parts of Newbury, Auburn, and Troy. For some reason the case was not tried, — for want of time, the Graham party said; for want of disposition on the part of the prosecution was the reason given by the friends of Wilson.

I had drifted out of the interest which I once felt in these parties, and was hard at work in my new field, when, meeting my friend Dan Punderson at the post-office one day along in June, he proposed bass-fishing on the pond, and promised to be at the outlet the next morning with minnows, &c., and would pull the boat for me. My new habit of virtue and abstinence was not quite formed, and I complied very cheerfully. The pond is a body of deep, pure water, in the bosom of beautiful hills about a mile and a half in length, by a half-mile in width, nearly divided by a wooded island lying against the east side and about two-thirds of the way from the outlet at the south end, north. It was then nearly surrounded by forest, and one of those lovely things in nature which fix themselves in the memory and affections of one familiar as I was with it.

I don't remember the success of that forenoon. We



worked slowly north, near the western shore, and so on around by the upper end, down the east side, and around west of the island. After passing that, one has a full view of the lower and larger part of the pond; and we discovered at Barker's landing, on the east side, a hard, smooth, white beach under grand old oaks and chestnuts, a gay throng of men and boys, matrons and maidens, whose flitting figures, and the draperies of the women under the summer noon sun against the leafy background, made a beautiful picture of life, warmth, and color. The landing took its name from a quaint old man, himself a character, who dwelt near it on the State road. It was the most accessible as well as the most attractive point on the shores of the pond, and was even then a place of resort for festive occasions, picnics, and holidays. Dan suggested that they were a party from Auburn; as he had heard that one was coming up from the Corners and State road, and which was to bring up a sail-boat which we saw running and tacking in the light air that at times strongly ruffled the water's surface. We floated and fished along down, steering wide of the landing, but going near enough to recognize such of the party as we knew. There were the two younger Stowes, their wives, Dave Wilson, and several from the Corners, among whom I saw Milley; and we passed John Graham, with one or two of the Staffords in the sail-boat, which they worked very awkwardly, not to say lubberly. The party was large and somewhat promiscuous, as it must be to include Dave Wilson and John Graham, and their friends. I understood afterward that it was started by Harrington, a well-known merchant at the Corners, to get the two parties out together, with the romantic idea of producing a better state of feeling among them. We drifted slowly along, exchanging words with those we knew, were invited to land, and had turned our



boat shoreward, just below the landing, when a loud, mingled cry of alarm, shout, and scream drew our attention back. On turning, we saw the sail-boat capsized, with two of the crew hanging to it, while the third, some yards from it then, was sinking. Dan sent our light shallop about to their aid. The sinking man's head appeared once, when the cry was raised that John Graham was drowning. The whole thing was so sudden that even cool men stood a moment as if off their balance. At the cry of the name of John Graham, a man from under the trees sprang down the little slope, bounded across the beach like a deer, dashed into the water, which was shoal for twenty or thirty feet, when the bottom fell suddenly away to a great depth. It was only just off the edge of this steep a few yards, that the luckless Graham sank. As the rescuer reached the margin of this precipice, he leaped his full length above the surface, and with his arms extended and the inner edges of his hands touching beyond his head, describing a beautiful curve, he disappeared headlong in the deep water, some three or four yards from the ground which he left, and scarcely disturbing the surface through which he clove his way. My God! I thought he never would appear again. An absolute silence for a half-minute, in which the very breeze held its breath. Our boat, under the impetus it had received, was already near the place, when suddenly the water was broken up just ahead of us, and the diver put his face up, breathed, and brought up the form of the drowning man. I was already in reach of him, and drew him up, and partly over the gunwale of our boat. A moment and he was where strong arms lifted and carried him to the sands. The gallant rescuer, with a stroke or two, gained the shoal water, and rising to his feet, I recognized Dave Wilson. He had rescued his enemy. Something of the nobleness of



the act was instantly recognized, and a spontaneous shout hailed him as he landed. Dr. Ludlow, who that spring removed to the Corners, was also present, and took immediate possession of the rescued man, who, although unconscious, gave unmistakable signs of life, and was without great trouble restored.

It was still supposed by many that Milley preferred John, if she was not engaged to him, but two or three, who were cool enough to observe her conduct in these trying moments, saw that she evinced no unusual interest in him: on the contrary, she ran into the water, and was the first to meet Dave as he landed. She was seen to eagerly extend her hands to him, and those nearest heard her fervently say, as if to herself, "Thank God!" For an instant Dave saw something wonderful in her eyes. Indeed, the whole womankind must be a wonder when one not quite nineteen has the power, by a mere look and one hand-touch, to annihilate the hardness, bitterness, and misery of a whole year of a man's life, change all his thoughts, and reverse the apparent tendency of his fortune. From that half-instant's meeting she glided away through the throng like a shadow, while he leaped upon the dry beach almost with a shout. Later, when he escaped from the others, he ran his eyes over and through the noisy and excited groups without seeing her.

He lingered a minute in vain, and started for his horse, to gallop to Parker's tavern, a mile away to the south, for a change of garments. As he was passing along the narrow path, through the close alders, at a little turn in it he met the innocent Milley returning from — where?

"O Dave, I do so want to see you!" she said in a low but melodious voice.

"Turn and walk with me," said the delighted youth.

"Not here and now. I am too much excited. There



are too many eyes and ears here ; come to me to-night," said the blushing girl, with a tone and look which meant more than the words, liberal as they were.

"I will," eagerly. "Where?" A pause.

"I will be at Alvirus Stowe's just at dark : she is kind to me. I must go now, David," with a sweet glance.

"Without fail, Milley." She passed him rapidly, and a moment later, curiously enough, left the path, and made her way back to the landing through the thick bush which grew on that side of it ; while the happy and exultant Wilson went on his spirited young horse bounding over the Newbury hills, southward, to Parker's.

The accident broke up the party. Graham was very soon carried to old man Barker's cabin, not a hundred yards distant, and before mid-afternoon the little beach was a solitude. The whole party were on their way south to their homes, all profoundly impressed with the strange turn given to the course of the incidents of this little history ; and everybody wondered what would happen next. Few had the hardihood to express any faith in the story that Dave had ever attempted John's life ; while many, quite in accord with the religious faith of the day and region, did not hesitate to declare that it was a manifest interposition of Providence, as a punishment and humiliation of John Graham, and a vindication and uplifting of Dave Wilson, whose conduct and exploit, the more they were scanned, the more worthy and admirable they seemed. The story which John had told of Dave's falling into the Cuyahoga when drunk was specially called to mind, and now he had been saved from drowning by this very Dave.

"How Milley must feel now ! Poor girl, I really pity her," said one woman. Milley had always been quite a favorite, though called proud.

"Didn't you notice how excited she seemed ? And they say she rushed into the water to meet Dave Wilson."



“I don’t wonder at it,” from another.

“Nor I,” said a third. “I would go into the Dead Sea for such a man!” And nobody reproved her for the speech.

“I wonder what old Ben Woodin will say now!” exclaimed a man to Harrington. “And what do you suppose will become of the case against Dave?”

“It will be dismissed, of course. If Graham appears, and tells that silly story against him now, we shall know why he was not drowned to-day. Of course he can’t, and our party comes out better than it might. After all, while most of the evil and all the deviltry of this world comes by design, the good which happens is accidental.” Harrington was a bit of a philosopher, and went on in silent thought.

To two of the party the day tarried long and the night lingered away. It came finally. In its gloaming a lithe, tall, girlish figure glided up the solitary highway from the Corners. Just north of Uncle Neat Hall’s, a man stepped from the margin toward her, as if he had awaited her approach.

“Oh! you almost scared me, David,” said Milley, in a pretty affectation of alarm, as she permitted him to come to her side. “What must you think of me? What will folks say if they know I came to meet you, David?” as if anxious.

“Say!” said the surprised David, “I don’t care what they say,” decidedly.

“Not on my account, David? Would not you care if I was thought illy of?”

“Who can think that?” really puzzled and a little disappointed. He had a half thought of rushing to her, and putting his arms about her, as he had read of in stories; and she was so shy and scrupulously afraid of what would be said.



"I shall not care much, if you do not misunderstand me," she said.

"Misunderstand you?" more puzzled.

"Let us go on, and go into Mrs. Stowe's," said the girl, quite frightened.

Dave turned; and they walked on in silence, — he in almost a state of collapse, so unlike what he had hoped, had expected, was she.

They entered the front-door (not the rule in the country), and found the parlor empty, but lighted.

"David," said the girl, in a deep, earnest voice, unwinding from her head a muffling cloud of soft, white stuff, "David, you have done a great thing to-day. You have saved the life of your enemy. You are so good and so generous that I want to thank you."

"Thank me!" in amazement.

"And ask you to forgive me for my wicked words to you."

"Oh!" in bewilderment.

"Do you remember the last time we were together coming from the Valley?"

"Do you think I would forget that, Milley?"

"You said that this John had told a story on you; and I said you had better say that to him."

"Yes, and I did say it to him."

"And because I was wicked and foolish enough to tell you too; and what an awful thing came of it!"

"Do you believe that I stole upon him in the woods, and shot at him as I would at a skunk in its hole, and missed him too? O Milley!"

"David, how can you be so cruel! You know I never believed a word of it — of any of these stories about you. Not a whisper," with emphasis.

"Then what can you think of this infernal" —



“David,” interrupting him with the force of her hand on his arm, “you saved his life. He should be sacred to you,” earnestly.

“‘Sacred to you’! I pulled him out of the water for you,” not equal to the more elevated soul of the woman. “He would have sent me to the penitentiary, yet his little finger is dearer to you than” —

“Speak it, David: I deserve it all,” as he hesitated. “You will some time know how cruel you are. You saved his life, but you will not spare me.” Tears were in her eyes, and tears were in her voice.

“What would you have, Milley?” in a dejected tone, and much softened.

“I wanted to thank you for showing you are the noble man I, your friends, all knew you were; and I wanted you should forgive me for my speech.”

“Is that all I had a right to expect from your coming? I begin to see what a fool I am,” bitterly.

“I don’t know what you expected. You could not help misconstruing my foolish conduct in seeking you. You are surely noble enough to be generous to a woman; or cannot a man be generous to a woman? There is something more I want to say. I had promised grandfather Woodin not to receive any attention from you, or to see you alone. I supposed this would not last long, and we should get over it; and, when I gave you to understand that my wish was what I was ordered to do, I told you a wicked lie. Can you forgive me this too, David?” wistfully, and with the color deepening on cheek and lip.

“If it was not true, it was wicked, Milley,” brightening; “for a more wretched boy has not lived than I since that night.”

“I am very sorry, David. Will you forgive me?”

“Do you like me, Milley?”



“You never told me that you liked me, David, till that night.”

“You knew I did, as well as a young feller could like a girl.”

“Still a girl likes to have things said to her,” turning her face away.

A pause. “Will you forgive me?” very faint and low.

“Do you like me?”

Like was about the strongest word of the timid, unsophisticated lover of that day on the Reserve. Young men never heard of flirtations, and knew nothing of the meaningless use of the words of passion and profound emotion. The word “love” was as awful and sacred to a young lover almost as the name of his Creator, and he dared not use it.

“Do you like me, Milley? Oh, that is not the word!” he cried, moved to the depths of a manly nature, neither weak nor shallow. “I love you, Milley, — I love you from my soul! I want to carry you in my arms, against my heart, all through your life. I want you for my own true wife.” His voice, his form, trembled with the depth and fervor of his passion, and he extended his hand to her.

With her face bent down and away from him, she placed her right hand in his, and remained silent. His other hand stole around the slender waist.

“Do you love me, Milley?”

“You have my hand. Does not that mean all?” in a very little voice.

“Still a boy likes to have things said to him,” in a voice a good deal like hers. “Will you be my wife?”

“I do love you — I always did. I will be your true wife so long as I live,” turning suddenly to him; and the last words came from the opening of his vest. He drew her quite to himself, and found a part of one cheek exposed to his lips. She withheld her own.



“Have you forgiven me?” from the vest.

“What do you ask? I can’t hear you.”

“Have you forgiven me?” a little plainer.

A light tap upon the door, and Milley, with flushing color, sprang to it.

“Uncle Ben and your grandmother are here,” said Mrs. Stowe, from the outside. The door was opened.

“Let them come in,” said Milley. “I told grandma I was coming to meet David. — You have nothing to fear, dear, I am yours now,” she said, going loyally to his side.

“Wal, wal, wal,” grumbled Uncle Ben, as he came shuffling along the corridor. “Where are the runaways?” as he entered the parlor-door. “Dave Wilson, you’re a rale Christian hero! You saved the life of your wost inemy — yes, only inemy. Give me yer hand. You’ve got ’er, and you shall keep ’er; and you shall be married from her old grandfather’s house. There, there!” nearly breaking down, as his wife and Mrs. Stowe rushed to Milley. “Wal, wal,” wiping his blind eye, “I was to blame. The old man was a leetle wrong, I own that. It was owin’ to them ’ere pesky horns o’ Habakkuk.”

“An’ the horns o’ the wicked shall be put down,” sharply croaked out a thin, quavering voice, as Old Stowe tottered his blinking way into the room.

“Is that you, you old Univarsalar?” called Uncle Ben, going toward him.

“Yis, you ole obstinate Redemptioner. You see, he’s gotten ’er, and it’s all the work o’ the univarsal love o’ God. What do you say to that? As St. Paul says in the” —

“Wal, wal, mebbly so, mebbly so. I’ll take that pint up to-morrer.”

“No, you sha’n’t, not till after this wedding is over,” said Mrs. Stowe, with good-natured decision.



“I’ll take a bout with you,” said Old Stowe. “Oh the blessed things!” groping towards the happy, teary lovers. “How rich the airth is in love! ‘Little children, love one another.’”

“David,” said Uncle Ben, “you must go home with Milley to-night. I want ye under my roof. The gal won’t come to ye without somethin’ to begin the house on. I’m not rich, but she’ll have a good settin’ out.

“I know she will, brother Woodin,” said the elder Stowe; “and I here pledge, that, for every dollar ye gin her, I’ll put into ’er hand two dollars in silver. Come, now.”

“That’s ginrous,” responded Uncle Ben. “Come, wife: we’re old, and we’ll be goin’. The children can come when they git ready: they’ll walk faster ’n we.”

“I guess they’ll walk wonderful fast to-night, grand-ther, now they have a right to be alone, and take their time,” answered the appreciative old lady. “Take yer time, children, the door’ll be open: you have a good deal to tell one another.”

Wiser in her maidenly instinct than the elder woman with her life’s experience, Milley did not permit herself and her lover the sweet license of a midsummer’s night lingering. She did not doubt him, or distrust herself, nor was she a prude. In her conscience she did not think it was right for even plighted youth and maiden to linger long, or be out late by the way.

And, starting but a few minutes after the elders, the young people reached the home of the Woodins, and entered it with them. It was a little “lateish” when Dave took leave that night; and as he stood on the doorstep, with a hand of Milley in his, —

“Dave,” she said, bending toward him from her higher perch in the doorway, laying her hand on his shoulder, —  
 “David, you have not forgiven me yet.”



“ Oh ! we had forgotten that, hadn't we ? ” very brightly, and willing to discuss it to any length.

“ I had not,” she said.

“ Will you kiss me ? ” asked he caressingly.

“ A pardon should not be purchased, nor kisses sold. love should trust love,” was the logical answer.

“ Nor is there any thing for love to pardon to love,” was his response.

“ Do you forgive me ? ”

“ With my whole heart and soul, might and mind.”

She bent fondly to him, and put her full, ripe lips to his with, “ Good-night, and God go with you ! ”

“ Good-night.” And he went out into the warm, mysterious night, beaming with the consciousness of a lover's first kiss that inspires while it blesses.

The next morning Old Stowe went pottering and spitting down the road towards Auburn Corners, and Uncle Ben Woodin was not seen at his usual haunts during the day. A wag afterwards told a story, about hearing, on that day, some unusual droning sounds in the rear of a deserted cooper's shop which stood in a secluded place, and how he effected an entrance into it, where he could easily hear the grum, muffled, good-natured semi-growls of Uncle Ben, interspersed with the broken cackle of Old Stowe in a subdued key, like the undertones of a disturbed bumble-bees' nest. As he told the story, these venerable boys at sundown left the place of assignation, one going one way, and one the other ; that soon after they met in Harrington's store, and exchanged characteristic greetings, as if they had not met for a month, yet with something of the conscious manner of two urchins fresh from robbing an apple-tree. For the truth of this I will not vouch. It has an air of eminent probability. The elder Stowe on his way home called at Alvirus's, and gave a rather confused account of how he spent the day.



At the ensuing term of the court, the case of the State of Ohio *vs.* David Wilson was dismissed. The prosecuting attorney said at the time, that the principal witness had become satisfied that the shooting was wholly unintentional, while a good many were satisfied that there was even no accidental discharge, which came to be the accepted version of the transaction. Graham that fall went to Michigan, which was the last I heard of him.

Dave failed in his effort to induce Milley to fix the wedding-day for New Year's. He pleaded hard for the first of March, saying he wanted to make sugar on his new place. Milley from the first named the next May Day, for which she gave a great many wise, sweet, and, of course, womanly reasons. She always thought, that, if she was ever married, it should be on the first day of May. She had never changed her mind. It was unreasonable to ask her to be married before that time; and, though Dave ought to be willing to wait a year longer, she would not compel him to.

The land which he purchased had at that time a small clearing and a snug cabin on it. The building was made as neat as good floors, windows, and doors could render it; and the colonel put up a frame adjoining it, with a roomy parlor, bed-room, and closet, which were all complete, and quite to the mind of the young housewife, who made the premises many visits in the mean time with Dave.

The loves of Dave and Milley ran smoothly to the inevitable day, which the bride met with the resignation and devotion of her heroic sex.

The Rev. Mr. Witter of Burton officiated on the happy occasion; and those grim old Philistines, Old Stowe and Uncle Ben Woodin, permitted him to come and go, without even a growl or a snarl, — “an’ him a college-larnt- Prespiterian,” as was remarked by a neighbor of theirs at the miracle of his escape.



Mrs. Alvirus Stowe made a party for the wedded lovers, — receptions had not then been invented, — and the Valley band, whose leading instrument was a horse-fiddle, for some reason never explained, failed to serenade them; and the next day they took possession of their new home.



# LU PETTENGILL'S PUNISHMENT.

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## CHAPTER I.

OF all the traders and traffickers, Joe Slyter was esteemed the sharpest in all the region of Southern Geauga. Horses were his favorite commodities for barter; but cattle, sheep, pigs, wagons, every thing, from a cow to a hoe-handle, known or recognized among men as property, were alike the subjects of his commercial enterprise. Clocks, and especially watches, were dealt in extensively. Peltries, which usually figure in the trade of a rude people holding a wilderness country, also received his attention. But horses, in which his special skill and virtue found their best field, were dearer to his heart as objects of dicker than any thing else known to him.

One exception there was, — Uncle Pettengill, who, when he put forth his best efforts, was supposed to be more than a match for Joe Slyter. Older and less active, still, as a horse-jockey, popular estimate ranked him as quite the first, especially since a notable trade made between the two. It was said that an exchange of horses once took place between these masters, in which Joe gave Uncle Pet a yoke of two-year-old steers as the difference in value, and that, upon the completion of the bargain, the old man made a present of the horse he had received, back to Joe.



This was the hardest cut Slyter ever received, and there was no end of the rigs run on him for this sore discomfiture.

“Ye see,” said Uncle Pet, in his dry, quiet way, with his eyes half closed, “airey one o’ them hosses separately was wuth nothin’, an’ both together was wuth less than one on ’em alone. Bullock had offered me three dollars in deerskins for mine, to carry his traps inter the woods that fall; but I had too much respect for ole’ age to make wolf-bait on ’im, an’ he wouldn’t a’ made much nuther. An’ then I didn’t want no deerskins, an’ winter was comin’ on, an’ I always kinder wanted to do suthin nice for Joe, an’ so I let him have both hosses, you see.”

Many were the prophesies of the ways by which Joe would retrieve his fame and fortune. Three or four years elapsed since Uncle Pettengill had floated on with the sluggish tide of that early day of “truck and dicker,” without again encountering Joe in a commercial transaction. They finally met one afternoon at Gardner’s store, by accident so far as Pettengill was concerned. He was over there doing a little trading with a horse and wagon, and Lu came over with him. While there, Joe came along, riding one horse, and leading another. He stopped, when a crowd gathered about them, and he stumped Uncle Pet for a trade.

On receiving this challenge, Uncle Pet gathered up his tall, rather ungainly form, sauntered out leisurely, and run his half-shut eyes over the round, naggish little mare which Joe led, and offered in trade. The old man pushed her about, pointed to his own horse, said he was open for a swop, secured a bit of wood from a pine box, drew out and opened a well-known keen jack-knife, seated himself on the edge of the platform in front of the store, surveyed his bit of wood for a moment thoughtfully, as if estimating



its capabilities, and awaited the onset of his enemy quite unconcernedly.

Joe made a careful examination of the property pointed out to him, and approached his cool and wary opponent with the prompt manner of a challenger bound to make an effort.

I do not propose to report the sayings — the encounter of the sly, shrewd wits — of these masters of horse cant and slang of the old school. Uncle Pet, with the skill of a Yankee whittler, proceeded to reduce his bit of pine to the proper dimensions, preparatory to giving it some definite shape, which would be determined by the impending contest. He occasionally made a remark, which the eager listeners picked up and repeated, as if they contained matter of great pith. He generally permitted the other side to monopolize the conversation. Once, one end of his wooden billet took from his fashioning knife the form of the bowl of a pipe, or that of an Indian tomahawk, but it did not so far approach completion as to indicate which, if either, was in the artist's mind.

Joe ably expatiated on the defects of the horse he hoped to receive, which in his hands was made to appear as most undesirable property. "You see, Uncle Pet," he continued, "he's a coarse-made brute, coarse-haired and coarse-grained. His head now — jess look at that are head! It is four foot long! Such a hoss never knows nothin'."

"He ain't a knowin' hoss, Joe, that's so," was the acquiescing answer. "He don't know much more'n some men I've seen, and that makes a fool of a hoss; an I'd be glad to get rid on 'im."

Joe also expended much time and eloquence on the good qualities of his mare, giving her imaginary pedigree and personal history, and dwelt effectively on her many



virtues and excellences. Uncle Pet sat whittling through it all, as if not hearing the panegyric. Finally, without looking up, he inquired her age.

"Nine year old the eleventh day o' last May," was the prompt answer, and the fortunate owner proceeded to fortify this declaration with a narrative of many particulars which made it entirely certain. As Uncle Pet looked up with a smile of incredulity, Joe asked, with spirit, if he doubted his word.

"Joe Slyter waan't born when that mare was a colt," remarked Uncle Pet to those about him, without noticing Joe's question.

"Was she the mother of Wolf-bait?" asked Alf Lee, one of the interested listeners.

"She's too old for that," was Uncle Pet's reply. "If that 'ere mare was a man, an' not a hoss, she would not have to work no poll-tax on the highways. You can't make a man pay arter he's sixty." When the laugh subsided, he turned to Joe, and continued, "I thought I'd seen the last o' that critter. When John Brewer an' I moved into this town, nigh on to twenty year ago, I bought that 'ere same mare on the 'Holland Perchis,' an' I drove 'er in here. She was old then. I kep' 'er seven or eight year, an' let Bildad Bradley have 'er, and he turned her into Thorndyke for land, an' that was ten year ago. There's a little bunch on the inside of 'er off fore-foot, that you can tell 'er by, where she got burnt in a fire-bed. A dozen men round 'ere knows 'er. I should want a little more boot than my hoss is wuth."

Once or twice before this point, a young girl had come out of the store, and made her way near the elder trader, and observed him for a moment, and then went back without a word. She seemed to be well known to most of those present, many of whom nodded to her, with "Good-



day, Lu ;'' while others regarded her with meaning but kindly looks.

Tall, slender, lithe, of no particular shape, as she was dressed, she was, nevertheless, one to strike the attention of most beholders. She had a way of half closing her large hazel eyes a little like her father ; while the wide-arching brows, delicate and exquisitely-cut features of the face, and the world of luxuriant dark hair (always in a state of insubordination), joined with extreme youth, an air of freedom and spirit, with a certain winsome grace of movement, were apt to make her a noticeable and an attractive object wherever she appeared. She was now seventeen, an only child ; and her mother, whose good looks she inherited, had been dead twelve or fifteen years.

Her father's housekeeper, and much of the time his sole companion, growing up without restraint, she developed into a free romp, full of audacious spirit, and yet a thorough woman in her instincts, and always redeeming her wild freaks by the girlish grace and *naïveté* which accompanied them. Just now, by her own leading, she was escaping from the tomboy period, of which she was a perfect specimen, to one of more decided womanliness, which she was touching upon very naturally. Her father was a well-to-do farmer, had been a hunter, a horse-trader, and trafficker generally. With little female companionship, save the wife of the man who worked her father's farm, Lu saw much of the rude men of that day, and felt no embarrassment in their company. It was quite usual for her to find herself surrounded by admiring youths and young men, while their seniors were becoming aware of her claims as a woman. The matrons regarded poor Lu with grave apprehension. They saw little in her to commend, and, after all, very little that they could seriously condemn. They knew their sons



were following her, and were obliged to content themselves with warning their daughters not to imitate her style and manner, which they would have found difficult, and they contemplated her future with doubt and misgiving. So gay and bright-spirited, so innocent and guileless, so obliging and kindly was she, that everybody liked her. Yet there was such a wilfulness and independence of temper in her, that no one felt at liberty to approach her with council or admonition, and she was maturing carelessly and free, as unconscious that possible harm could lie in wait for her as if growing up in the seclusion of a nunnery; and she was in scarcely more danger. The youths and young men who had grown up with her in the diminishing forests had imbibed much the same notions of primitive innocence, and very few men who met Lu Pettengill would ever have thought of ill in connection with her.

Indeed, there is a sort of masculine instinctive impression that the seemingly free and reckless girl is more difficult of approach than the demure and shy.

When Lu came out of the store the second time, she was joined by Alf Lee, who asked her, "Are you going to Webster's to-night, Lucille?"

"I don't know," she answered. "What is it to be?"

"Well, they call it a paring-bee, but have made a good deal of preparation, and have invited some from quite a distance. There will be a dance, and I shall play for 'em. Ed Barns will be there, I understand, and perhaps his sister."

"Ed Barns and his sister! Oh, my! I wonder if they will! They are said to be the highest kind, from a city 'down country' somewhere," said Lu with vivacity.

"Did you never see Ed, Lu?"

"I never have. He is something quite dreadful, I s'pose?"



"No. You'll like him, Lu. He is a real gentleman; and they are never stuck up, you know."

"How should I know, Alf? He must be something strange."

"He is — for Newbury and Auburn. His sister and cousin belong to the church. All the Barnses are Baptists but Ed. They came in last spring. The old deacon is rich. He bought all the land from Bridge Creek to Bainbridge."

Lu was not much interested in this statement.

"I would like to go," she said, speaking of the party; "but I don't know as any our way were invited but me."

"I'll tell you how you can go. Dan Punderson is going in his new carriage, and I am going with him. We'll take two or three of the State Road girls, and come around for you. I was going to propose this to you. What do you say?"

"Oh, that'll be just splendid!" clasping her hands in an ecstasy. "Thank you, Alf! I must take father home at once," she said in answer.

"He hain't finished Joe Slyter and his trade yet."

"Why, Alf, he has no idea of a trade!"

"How do you know?"

"You can always tell by his whittlin'. He is now only just running this Mr. Slyter."

"How can you tell by his whittlin'?"

"Why, there are two or three things he always makes, — a pipe, a tomahawk, a gun, and a scalpin'-knife. He'll begin one of these, and finish it with his trade. Well, he began one of them, and gave it up. He is just making nothing now." They turned to the traders just as her father had finished his history of Joe's mare. Lu approached her father, took the diminished bit of wood from his hand, examined it, and threw it into the highway with



a little air. "Father, it is most night, and we must go home," she said quite decisively.

The act and words produced a laugh, and remarks such as "Lu knows!" "She's all right!"

Uncle Pet docilely shut up his knife, and turned to his opponent. "Joe," said he, "find somethin' that waan't in the ark, an' come over: you'll always find me reasonable." And he went and drove his wagon around for Lu and her purchases.

"You'd better ketch 'im when Lu ain't round," said one to Slyter.

"She never interferes with the old man's trades," put in another.

As she turned back to the store, the young girl was met by a young, good-looking, and, for that region, a very well-dressed man, with the manner of one accustomed to a different state of society from that which surrounded Lu. He lifted his hat, and bowed with a deferential air. "Good-evening, Miss Pettengill."

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Van Dusen," she answered, a little formally for her.

"May I inquire whether you attend the party this evening, Miss Lucille?" he asked.

"I think I shall," was her answer.

"I have a horse and buggy, and am wholly at your service," he said respectfully; "and it would give me great pleasure if you'd permit me to drive round for you."

"Thank you, Mr. Van Dusen," said the girl, not displeased at this attention. "Alf and Dan, with some of the State Road girls, are coming round for me," was her answer.

"If you find the carriage crowded, I will take you home, Miss Pettengill," added the persistent gentleman, a little disappointed.



“He might a-known Lu wouldn’t go with ’im,” said a young man, who heard the offer and declination, to a companion. “He has been a-stickin’ round after her all summer.”

Neither of them saw any thing unusual in a gentleman’s offer to carry a young girl out, alone, to an evening party, as there was not at that time.

The subject of this remark had boarded several months at Parker’s, was good-looking, wore a blue broadcloth coat, light kerseymere pants, and a gold watch, had a plenty of money, and drove a fine horse. He was on good terms with everybody, and had a faculty of making acquaintances.

Lu had seen him several times. He had made occasions to call at her father’s house two or three times, and talked horse with Uncle Pet, and pleasant nonsense to her. There was much in his address and respectful manner to her rather pleasing to the young girl; and she would have accepted his attendance in the present instance, had she not been provided for.



## CHAPTER II.

THE Websters were among the early and well-to-do of the settlers in Auburn. They continued to live in the quite commodious log-cabin until they were able to erect a spacious farmhouse near the primitive structure, which was now enclosed, and the floor laid, making a fine dancing-hall when the preliminary labors of the evening were finished.

An apple-paring was often an informal affair, of a dozen young people of the neighborhood in their ordinary dress, extemporized on short notice, or a more elaborate occasion, where a hundred would gather from more distant neighborhoods on formal invitations, without which no one felt at liberty to attend. Large or small, there was always real substantial work performed; and often ten, fifteen, or twenty bushels of apples were pared, quartered, and strung for drying, when, with refreshments, the young people were remitted to other pursuits. At the Websters' they came early, and quite filled both rooms of the old house, where, amid the clangor of the voices of sixty or seventy young men and maidens, all in high spirits, the fruit prepared for the occasion was rapidly disposed of, and the bowls, pans, plates, and baskets, the *débris* and litter, were cleared away, and a profusion of cake, pumpkin-pies, and cider in several stages, to suit the taste, were furnished to the laughing and rather noisy guests. Not much time was spent on this waste of cake and cider, when the door of the unfinished house was opened, and the company entered. It was still in the hands of the



carpenters, though cleared of litter, with extemporized seats. When lit up as now, and filled with rosy-cheeked girls in bright colors, and ruddy-faced young men and boys of that not wholly rude assemblage of rustics, the spectacle was gay and animated. There were several girls, and not a few young men, whose dress and manners had the tone and fashion of the world beyond the woods.

That region lay remote from cities and busy crowds ; and the time was before newspapers, railroads, lyceums, and lectures. The people were practical Democrats ; and the social elements in the natures of the New-Englanders, somewhat modified by the free life of the West, were active and vigorous, and their daily intercourse was more intimate, and under less restraint, than among the same people and their descendants of to-day.

On this occasion the musicians were present ; and at the first twangs of the fiddles the floor was filled, — two ranks (a row of blooming girls facing their partners), — in the old-fashioned “contra-face” dance, where pigeon-wings and all manner of fancy steps prevailed, and any unusual clumsiness ruled the unfortunate youth out.

The ball was opened with time-honored “money-musk,” followed by “cheat-the-lady,” “chorus-jig,” “eight-reel,” &c., in rapid succession.

Dan Punderson had taken Zach Burnett ; and they went for the Shaw girls, the youngest of whom had a deserved reputation for beauty. As they went around for Lu Pettengill, they did not reach Webster's until the ball had opened, when their entrance made a little sensation. Alf, who had found other means of conveyance, passed his violin to one of the young men near him, and devoted himself to Lu and the dance. Poor child ! in her thoughtless spirits this was an advantage to her. And while many would not choose this rollicking, mimicking,



witty half-fiddler, half-gentleman, the mad-cap leader of fun and frolic, as the friend of a giddy girl, he was true-hearted, and had a genuine big brotherly regard for the unprotected Lu, and the standing of the Lees made him acceptable in all places. On the present occasion his duties were in the line of keeping the young men and boys from pressing too annoyingly about the young girl, which seemed as natural for them as for bees and wasps about a bit of fresh honeycomb. Though on her best behavior to-night, subdued and modest as a young maiden need be, some of her own sex thought her woman enough to be criticised, or that she presented a good subject whereby to illustrate the blindness and folly of men.

As often happens, the guests at a party divide into groups, as association, taste, or liking dictate; especially is this tendency noticeable among women, particularly those who may be left to their own resources for amusement. The centre of one of these was Miss Dorcas Briggs, an oldish young lady when a girl, quite advanced at twenty-three, and a decided old maid at twenty-five. That she was still Miss Briggs was thought to be due to a want of appreciation on the part of young men. At the present moment she was surrounded by a little knot of kindred feminine spirits not more distinguished by the devotion of the young men than herself, and who, as both sexes will, talked of those about them, and in a strain that women sometimes do.

“How did Lu Pettengill get here to-night, I wonder?” asked one of the Wilson girls.

“She come stramin’ across lots, afoot and alone,” answered Miss Bradley petulantly.

“She didn’t go far alone, I’ll warrant!” said Dorcas. “She don’t stir that there ain’t a gang of men and boys taggin’ ’er about. Poor thing! she don’t know any better. It’s a perfect shame the way that girl goes on!”



“Well, she has never had a mother, you know,” suggested one, a little more considerate, “and then she is attractive.”

“Attractive! Fiddlesticks! Any girl could attract if she was only a mind to,” was the bitter reply.

“And her father is always off horse-tradin’,” suggested the same thoughtful girl. “And Spring’s wife ain’t nobody.”

“They do say,” put in Miss Bradley, “that, of all places on Sunday, Old Pettengill’s house beats all. There’s more’n a dozen young chaps there from mornin’ till night. Old Pet is swoppin’ horses, and the boys are goin’ on with Lu. And she goes ’round with ’er hair flyin’, and ’er shews without strings in ’em, stringin’ ’round.”

“You must own that she looks well to-night,” said her excusing friend.

“Somebody must a-fixed ’er up,” said Dorcas. “She came with the Shaw girls, and wears some o’ their duds, I’ll bet!”

“Ann’s would be too large for ’er, and Helen’s too short,” was the suggestive answer. “She seems to have a new feller after her to-night. Who is he? — with brown clothes, standin’ by Varn Ganson.”

“Oh! that is young Ed Barns, a son of Deacon Barns,” said Dorcas.

“He is not a son of Deacon Barns, he is a nephew,” said Miss Wilson.

“It makes no difference,” said Dorcas, “he’s like all the rest. He seems to be takin’ turns with this Van Dusen. They’ve kind o’ divided ’er between them to-night; and the rest have to stand back, like motherless calves.”

“She’d better look out for that Van Dusen. I should think ’er father would know better than to have him about so much,” said Miss Bradley.



"Oh! he lets the old man cheat him in horses, and makes it up with Lu," said Dorcas, which made a laugh. "I shouldn't s'pose Ed Barns would be taken by 'er. I thought they all belonged to the Babtist Church. They are as rich as mud. Jim Gates, who worked there last summer, said they used silver spoons an' forks — real solid silver — every day! Think o' that!"

"That's one o' Jim's stories. Who ever heerd o' silver forks?" said Miss Wilson. "How will Alf Lee like it, I wonder, havin' Ed Barns an' Van Dusen carryin' on with Lu this way?"

"Oh! he has to stan' back with the boys. What does Lu care for him, do you s'pose? He can't help himself."

"Alf is a real good friend of hers," said the thoughtful friend of Lu's. "And he tells her a good many things."

"Here he comes, girls," said Dorcas, as the laughing, cynical young man approached the group.

"So the Dorcas Society is in session," he observed, in a tone between banter and sarcasm. "Who has been catching it now?" laughing with real good-nature.

"We unfortunate girls have been wondering what there is about Lu Pettengill that makes all you men and boys run after her," answered Dorcas, with straightforward ill-nature.

"Oh! that is a secret, Miss Briggs," he answered gravely.

"A secret! Well, I should like to know what it is, I should!"

"So would I," added Miss Bradley.

"It will be perfectly safe with both of you. Neither of you will ever try it," he replied a little sharply.

"How do you know we won't try it? What is it? Come."

"She never runs after the men and boys."



“Oh!” and a laugh from the other girls.

“You horrid creature!” from Dorcas.

“They don’t give her a chance,” said Miss Bradley, in too much heat to consider her words.

“You are right for once, Miss Bradley,” replied Alf.

“You had better keep watch of Van Dusen,” said Dorcas spitefully.

“Mr. Barns will watch him,” said the youth, laughing.

“And who will watch Mr. Barns?” asked Miss Wilson.

“Van Dusen and I will watch ’em both,” he answered.

“Of course. We shall all see how it will come out,” said the still tart Miss Briggs, as the young man moved away.

He had been on the lookout, and took Lu in charge, as stated. At the first opportunity he had introduced young Barns to her, and committed her to his charge during the evening. Lu was surprised and a little disappointed in his appearance. She had conjured up a figure something like Van Dusen, only more striking. She found him common, plainly dressed, without rings, watch chain or seals. His face was strong, with marked features, and rather plain. His eyes were fine, and his voice low and musical. In some way he came to her so frankly and kindly, and yet with such marked respect and courtesy, that she was at perfect ease with him at once. Something there was about him that made him unlike, and, as she felt, superior to those about them, even the exquisite Van Dusen, with his gloves, velvet vest and coat-collar. She did not much admire his dancing, so quiet and such simple steps; and his ignorance of the figures greatly amused her.

Whatever was the estimate of this well-bred young man of the rustic maiden, he was quite willing to devote himself to her, but was not permitted to monopolize her.



Among those disposed to seek her was Van Dusen, whose dress, manner, and style have been mentioned; and his get-up had much to take the eye and excite the fancy of a rustic girl of seventeen. The marked attention of the two most conspicuous men of the party was quite noticeable. The gentlemen had never met before, and neither manifested any strong liking for the other.

"Who is this Mr. Van Dusen who claims so much of your attention?" finally asked Mr. Barns of the young girl.

"Oh! he boards at Parker's, and drives and rides about."

"He dresses and wears style as if he were in New York," was the response.

"Perhaps he thinks we are as good as anybody, Mr. Barns."

"He certainly thinks you are worth pleasing, Miss Pettengill, and in that he is right," said the young man, with a grave sincerity, looking down into the face of the girl very respectfully, and a little uncertain whether she meant to assert herself and surroundings.

"Mr. Barns is an old acquaintance of yours?" said Van Dusen to her a little later, when he had secured her for a dance.

"Very old indeed," said the young lady, laughing. "I saw him for the first time fully three hours ago."

"Oh! I thought by your manner toward him that he must be an old acquaintance, at least."

"I do feel as if I had always known him," said the artless girl. "He isn't a bit stuck-up."

"Oh! that is it, is it?" said the curled and gloved gentleman thoughtfully. "The Barnses are said to be rich," he added.

"Are they? Well, you see we are all about alike here, Mr. Van Dusen," answered Lu.



The gentleman turned to study the girl's face for a moment, as had Ed Barns, to see what was the meaning of her words.

It was late when the party broke up. On their way to the carriage, Lu told Alf that Mr. Van Dusen felt quite hurt towards her because she would not permit him to take her home.

“The d—l he does! Let him feel hurt then.” And the girl, wondering why he spoke so rudely to her, silently took her seat in the carriage which brought her.



## CHAPTER III.

As mentioned, no man was shrewder at a barter than Uncle Pet. Under a careless air of indifference he carried a mind full of expedients, which worked in subtle ways, and produced what the folk called luck, which took the permanent form of thrift. His hand had the transmuting power of Midas. His classification of property was extensive, if not logical. He had "truck," "truck and dicker," and "high dicker." A social and liberal man he was; and what with the growing attraction of Lu, a disposition for trade, to see customers, to see others trade (for which the native Yankee has an eye), to go somewhere, the Pettengill house was a place of much resort, especially on Sundays, and there was a real foundation for the ill-natured comment of Miss Briggs and her friend Miss Bradley. As may be supposed, Mr. Pettengill was a good-natured, careless man; and, though in his way devotedly loving his only child, he seemed quite unaware that she had passed the line of childhood, and had become a very attractive young woman, or that the younger frequenters of his house were there on her account.

On the Sunday following the Webster party, there was the usual chance gathering at the Pettengills', — men, old and young, with a sprinkling of boys. The house was one of the better sort of farmhouses, and neatly painted when first finished, now several years before. After the death of Lu's mother, house, yard, fences, and out-buildings had suffered by the owner's neglect, and fallen into a slovenly decay. There was also quite a comfortable log-



house on the place, in which dwelt Bill Spring, who worked the farm, and whose wife was the only woman who had ever had any supervision of Lu. And her older children were often Lu's companions in the absence of her father.

Lu had something of the shrewd, easy nature of her father; and her housekeeping may have been a little careless, though it was the remark of all the women in the neighborhood that Lu Pettengill could do when she set herself about it. She had great dexterity, they said, at turning off things when she put her hand to them.

"I wish to gracious she'd turn off the men and boys about 'er!" said Dorcas when this remark was made to her, — a thing which probably had never occurred to Lu to attempt.

This Sunday did not prove a good day for trade. In fact, Uncle Pet had a New-Englander's indisposition to real business on Sunday, and was never known to conclude a trade on that day. In a metaphysical way he did not regard the sabbath as really and in fact broken, so long as any thing remained to complete a transaction. "We will look the critters over," he said on this Sunday to Baker, who came up from Mantua. "You can see the steers, and kind o' make up yer mind about 'em. I've seen the hoss; and, if we don't think alike, no harm done."

Many friends and customers called during the forenoon, from quite a circuit, and looked and talked over, and shaped out several inchoate trades. Half a dozen horses were tied along the fence by the road, whose owners, with other 'idlers, gathered about Uncle Pet, and moved with him from one object of barter to another, till all had been gone over, and the prospects of commerce were developed and discussed, and anecdotes of former trades recounted, interspersed with Uncle Pet's observations, many of which were quite maximic. "Never



“speak ill of a man's hoss or his darter,” he remarked. “You may own the hoss afterwards; or yer boy may marry the girl—or somebody will: give 'em all a fair chance. Hosses an' wimmin giner'ly shows their own faults theirselves, if they have 'em.”

It was also known, to those who observed and appreciated him, that he never whittled on Sunday. He had been known to take up a bit of tempting wood, and bring out and open his knife, and run his finger along its edge, in the presence of a Sunday customer, under great provocation; but he always restrained himself.

The admirers of Lu, and those who vibrated between her and her father, as a few did, made their appearance during the day, from mid forenoon till evening.

On this day several from Music Street, as the road on which the young fiddlers lived was called, had strolled there across the woods, some from the State Road, and other neighborhoods as remote as Auburn Corners.

Alf was there, as he often was, and a little surprised to meet the Wards from the West Part. “What the deuse did you come for?” he asked of Ed, quite as heavy and stupid a youth as the country had then produced.

“I brought 'im over,” said Mark the younger, in a piping voice, “to trade to Mr. Pettengill for ‘truck,’ or ‘truck and dicker.’ ”

“If you can work him off for nothing, it would be money in your pocket, Mark. I think Uncle Pet don't take animals of his build and length of ear. I guess you'll have to drive him back again, Marcus.”

The young men, as usual, lingered a while outside, indulging in rather coarse chaff and banter, before they ventured into the house, not admitting to themselves, perhaps, the cause of their coming. When they entered, they found Lu about her home duties, with her hair caught up



in a picturesque fashion, and dressed in a way to provoke the criticism of women, and which, while no man could describe, he would in his secret soul think very becoming. Certain I am, no man was ever known to question her dress, or any thing else about her. In some way her light form seemed becomingly draped; and it always imparted winsomeness to what she wore, in spite of her want of care. Any thing womanly, having such a head, and as she bore it, with such a face and eyes, such mouth, cheeks, and chin, involved and sometimes lost in such hair, never failed with men; and the charm, after all, was in her abundantly piquant womanliness, even in the excess of her spirits, which bordered on the wild at times. She said and did nothing but what a woman or girl might say or do, and in a way impossible to a man or boy, and therefore, in male eyes, neither misfitting nor improper.

She always received her callers in the most unconventional way in the world. She met them as she was, at once, in a bright, cordial way, and it could never occur to her that she was not presentable, and she would not know how to make an excuse, nor could she imagine a condition or situation where one could be necessary. She called the most of them by their first names, and as if their coming was a matter of course, and was as unconscious of their admiration as that any part of her conduct was liable to criticism. She treated them all alike, and in the exuberance of her spirits and kindness had no favorites.

Toward evening Mr. Van Dusen drove up and came in, begloved and neat, as usual. "Superfine, just alike on both sides," as Alf expressed it. Him, Lu distinguished by calling him Mr. Van Dusen.

Something later Ed Barns called, neatly dressed, and paid his respects to the young hostess in a way which indicated to the young men present that he was calling on



the mistress of the house in her own domain, — had come for that especial purpose ; and he addressed her in rather marked contrast to the way they approached her, and which advanced her much in their respect. They also observed the easy manner with which she received his homage as her proper due. Mr. Barns was from the East, and he was felt to be authority on all matters of deportment and etiquette. He did not remain beyond the limit of a usual call, and quite absorbed the attention of Lu while he remained. His manner was easy and courteous to those whom he found there, a little ceremonious toward Mr. Van Dusen, and he left a most favorable impression when he took leave.

Some one ventured a criticism upon him, when Lu playfully interrupted him : “ We don't ever talk of our friends who have just left, unless to praise them,” she said.

Van Dusen did his best to be on favorable terms with Alf, and finally took him away in his buggy. The others went off by twos and threes, and remitted Lu to her own thoughts and fancies at an early hour.

Indeed, she had established a tacit understanding, seldom disregarded, that no one was privileged to claim her society at any but usual hours, among a people where unusual hours ended early.

It would have been a great relief to these rustic youths to have known that the usages of a more advanced stage of society entirely authorized their calling on Lu, and that this expression of a young man's admiration was its own sufficient justification. As it was, they felt sheepish as calling without excuse ; and, as they came without any admitted errand, they did not know when it was done, and were as much embarrassed to leave as to approach the object of attraction.



## CHAPTER IV.

DEACON BARNES was not only a man of large means for that day, but a man of public spirit and usefulness. He first turned his attention to the Baptist Church, which soon took on fresh life and strength under the application of his vigorous will and generous aid. He next devoted himself to the broader field of education. A man of culture, and quite apprehending the needs of the new community he was now identified with, he went about putting the schools in his immediate neighborhood on a more enlightened basis. His own daughter and niece, Ed's sister, had been engaged in the summer schools with great success, and drew to them a number of girls usually thought too old to attend the summer schools, taught by girls for one dollar per week, which was twice as much as the same girl could earn at the spinning-wheel.

Mr. Barnes and Uncle Pettengill were territorially in the same district, although living somewhat remote from each other, measuring the distance by the established highways. Upon the approach of winter the deacon bestirred himself to have the schoolhouse put in good repair, and such a feeling of interest excited among the residents, that his nephew Ed was employed to teach the school, at quite a liberal rate of compensation for that day; and, to make his labors somewhat effective, his uncle advanced quite a sum to secure the necessary new books which a regular classification of the scholars required. After two or three days' experience of the wants, Ed dismissed the school, and went to Painesville and purchased them.



Though without practice as a teacher, young Barns had received a very thorough English education by the latest methods, was a young man of vigorous good sense and popular address, and, though reluctant to undertake the charge of the school, he entered upon it with the determination to deserve at least the commendation of his uncle, whether he met the approbation of patrons generally or not. In consideration of the large wages paid him, it was understood that the directors were at liberty to receive pupils from other districts, who were to pay full tuition without benefit of the school fund belonging to the district proper. This arrangement drew to the school a large number of young men and women from the neighboring districts to enjoy the superior advantages of the new methods of instruction.

Within a week after receiving his new books and a blackboard, the name of which had never before been heard there, he had his numerous school well in hand; and, after the first month had passed, all cavilling at his new methods was silenced, and pupils and patrons zealously united with the now popular instructor to carry the school forward with great success.

That winter was an event in the life of Lu. Though nominally "boarding round," as it was called, and while he probably went the entire round of all the homesteads in his domain, young Barns lived most of the winter at two or three places, including his uncle's. Mr. Pettengill's was the most eligible house convenient to his school, and was very early and much resorted to by him, especially in stormy weather. He soon discovered not only that Lu had very considerable quickness and aptitude for learning, but developed a taste for reading, and a lively appreciation of Scott's poems, which he furnished her with, and many of his novels. This opened the world of romance



to the kindling heart of the young girl, whose docility and application enabled her also to keep up with her classes in school, where she was one of the best pupils. She had a girl-friend boarding with her, who divided with her the care of the house; and she was thus enabled to give most of her time to her studies and books. The young master was ever mindful of what was due from him as a gentleman to the young women and men under his instruction. Though suspected by more than one of her girl companions of undue preference for Lu, he conducted himself with the utmost circumspection and prudence, and became the object around which more than one maiden's innocent fancy hovered, while to Lu he undoubtedly shone as a star of considerable lustre.

Near the close of the school the master began to require absolute silence during the last exercise for the day, which was spelling. For this brief period all the juniors were released from study, and the whole school was expected to observe the strictest order and decorum. To insure absolute silence, the punishment of ferule — one or more blows on the palm of the hand — was denounced against the crime of whispering. Several days under this somewhat severe regimen went on without any infraction of this law.

One day, just as the last word was about to be given out, amid the most profound silence, Lu, who had from the first day, to the surprise of the world, been one of the most decorous and well-behaved of the pupils, suddenly turned to a girl near her, and said "O Sue!" in a voice audible to the whole school. Barns turned to her in utter surprise. There was no help for it. He omitted the last word, took from his table a light ruler of wood, used to rule the writing-books, and approached the offender. Surprised into the act, the young girl's face crimsoned,



and as the master approached her she as suddenly became pallid. The eyes of the whole school were upon her; and a pained feeling, an apprehension, as of something unusual, something bad, about to happen, seemed to come upon the children. Punishment by the infliction of a blow had not been administered in that school.

"Miss Pettengill, did you whisper?" His voice was low, and, spite of him, tremulous.

"I did; but I did not mean to," in a clear, pleading tone, looking up in a frightened, innocent way into the master's face.

"Hold out your hand." This time the voice was firm; and a slender, very beautiful, and, for a housewife, a delicate little hand, was extended, and at the same time the pained young face went down.

"Indeed, indeed, Mr. Barns" — The pleading voice stopped. He took the tips of the slender fingers in his other hand, and she knew that she was not to be spared. "The hand is my own, Mr. Barns," she said proudly, withdrawing it from his slight grasp, and immediately presenting it again for punishment. The slight ruler descended, barely touching the sweet palm, and fell from the nerveless grasp of the young master, who raised both his hands for an instant, and covered his face with them. A half-sob broke from the young girls as the ruler descended, and more than one manly brow was knit in an indignant frown upon the young master. He recovered his ruler and his wonted manner, and dismissed the school.

The violation of the rule was flagrant. The Yankee mind of old and young had an instinctive veneration for law, and the scholars felt that the punishment had to be inflicted. They could not blame the master; but they went away with hurt feelings, as if an unavoidable calamity had fallen upon them all. When the school was dis-



missed, the larger girls gathered silently around Lu, now cold and proud. Many of them burst into tears of sympathy, and were eager to kiss her; but she put them by with a dignity of manner never seen in her before, and took her way from the schoolhouse.

She went very quietly and directly home, saying no words to anybody. At home she discharged her household affairs rapidly and silently. She then sat down with her books, under the watchful eyes of her friend Sue Brown, and turned to her lessons; but her friend observed that her eyes, and apparently her thoughts, were not on her study. She put away her grammar, took a volume of Scott, turned to the closing scenes of the "Lady of the Lake," closed the book without reading, and sat looking into the fire. A moment later the color flashed up in her cheek, as a light, quick step was heard on the stoop outside. She sprang to the door, and opened it ere the tap for admission was given.

"Good-evening, Mr. Barns."

"Good-evening, Miss Pettengill."

"Will you walk in?" she asked in a very quiet voice.

The young man stepped in, paused, then turning to her, —

"I was afraid I could never meet you in peace again," he said in a low voice, intended for her alone.

"O Mr. Barns! how meanly you must have thought of me!" she replied touchingly.

"Meanly! Miss Pettengill, I dare not say how" — he checked himself. "I wished to see your father also," he said, in quite a different tone and manner from the unfinished sentence with which he began.

They went forward, and the young man paused by a seat near the fire, where Mr. Pettengill sat silently cogitating, as was his custom; while the table and lights occupied by the girls were a little remote.



"Mr. Pettengill," said the young man at once, without taking the offered seat, "a little thing occurred in school this afternoon that has pained me very much, and I want to talk with you about it."

"And that little thing," said Lu, coming forward very promptly, "was feruling the wicked Lu for breaking the rules of the school. — Mr. Barns," with real dignity, "if it is necessary that my father be troubled with this 'little thing,' I am the one to tell him." Which she did in the most literal and explicit manner. When he came to understand that his only child, his Lu, had really received a blow, there were symptoms of rising anger.

"How, young man! Did you really strike her for such a trifle?" addressing Mr. Barns.

"Father, father," said the girl, stepping to him, and placing her hand on his arm, "it was not a trifle. The order of his school depended on it. He had to do it. Please, please, don't say any thing about it," beseechingly.

"Did he hurt you?"

"Not my hand — not a bit. He hardly touched it."

"Was that all?"

"That was all," said the girl, who moved away to the table, as the greatly-relieved young man took the seat offered by the fire.

"'Pears to me, Mr. Barns," said the father, not at all satisfied, but who, for politic reasons, did not wish to discuss the matter much in the presence of the girls, — "'pears to me this is shavin' purty close; ferilin' a girl for a whisper — an' she woman-grown."

"She is a woman," said the youth, "if there is one in the world."

"We don't quite like strikin' women here on the Western Resarve," replied Uncle Pet, not much mollified



by the emphatic declaration of the young man. "As you'd made such a law, I s'pose you had to stan' to it, no matter who or what broke over it. I mean to be reasonable. I'm not one to find fault. It seems a little hard, though—the poor thing!" drawing his hand hastily across his misty eyes.

"Mr. Pettengill," said the deeply-moved youth, "I presume the rule was an unwise one. I presume I should have overlooked the violation of it. I do assure you I would sooner strike my own hand off than injure a hair of your daughter." These words were pronounced with a fervor that left no doubt of the young man's sincerity, and greatly mollified the rising anger of the old man.

"Wal, wal, Mr. Barns, it's no consequence. Everybody speaks well o' you. I'm satisfied. Let us say no more about it. — Lucille, bring us some cider and apples," he said.

The young girl placed a basket of beautiful fruit, with plates and knives, on a stand near the two men, and filled out a glass of cider, which she handed to the younger. As she was doing this, he was pained at the stricken expression of her face as she raised her eyes for one moment to his. Having met the wish of her father, the young woman withdrew from the room.

Mr. Pettengill and his guest maintained a desultory conversation for a few moments, when the young man made his way to the table where Miss Brown was apparently engaged with her lessons, to which he devoted some attention, and gave her aid in them. He lingered a minute. Lu did not again appear; and, requesting Sue Brown to wish her good-evening for him, he took his leave.

Lu arose early the next morning with a dreary sense of change and loneliness. She could see by her eyes that she must have wept much of the night through. She



bathed her face and eyes, and, without waking Sue Brown, went down, and about the necessary affairs of the house. Ere schooltime she had in a good measure recovered her usual looks, and went bravely off with Sue, to face her teacher and schoolmates. Nothing could surpass the considerate kindness with which the most of them received and treated her. No word of the occurrence of yesterday was said in her presence. All that day, and for two or three succeeding days, Lu avoided the eye of her teacher, which was very often upon her. Nor did he succeed in regaining the old footing with her while the school continued.

Punishments — blows upon the person — were then the rule in school as well as in the family, and it would have been a remarkable case which should have attracted much attention. And yet the flogging of Lu Pettengill by Ed Barns was a good deal talked about.

Dorcas Briggs declared that it was good enough for her. For her part, she was glad that she had met one young man who treated her as she deserved.

Van Dusen thought that Alf ought to hold Ed Barns responsible for it; while that clear-headed young man found trouble in getting a satisfactory view of the transaction in all its bearings.

The school ran on, and ended in mid March; and, so far as the world saw, nothing came of this incident.



## CHAPTER V.

VAN DUSEN came along on the stage, from toward the Ohio River, about a year before the opening of my tale, with two or three trunks, and stopped at Parker's, where he had since remained. He was very well dressed, wore rings, and seemed to have plenty of money. He purchased a horse or two, drove about, and made himself acquainted at once. Evidently he was of a different class of men from the farmers and mechanics of the region where he sojourned. He appeared familiar with the South-west, that unknown region of blood and romance; had been in all the principal cities of the United States, but said little of himself or former life, — a gentleman of leisure living on his money, a rather handsome man, twenty-eight or thirty years old, of showy manners, and much inclined to cultivate the society of young girls, with whom he was quite a favorite. His attentions to Lu had become marked, and evidently not displeasing to her.

The new pursuits and interests of the young girl during the winter in a great measure broke up her father's house as a resort for the young men and boys, who found a charm in her presence; and, when the school closed in the spring, they observed in some marked way a change in her, — as sweet and winning, but much more grave and quiet, as if in some sort absorbed, and not inclined to break into the romping, frank ways of former times. The period of school and study had not been favorable to the courtship of Van Dusen. He had been obliged to hover about in the near distance, occasionally rushing in, and



escaping again. When he and Ed Barns met, they were civil and very polite ; could never be more. Van Dusen disliked Ed, and that young man very much distrusted Van Dusen. The breaking-up of winter and the closing of school left the Pettengill coast quite clear again ; and, with the hardening of the roads in mid April, Van Dusen was often calling upon Lu, — not on Sundays, as formerly, but many times on week days ; and two or three times the young lady had taken a seat in his light top-buggy for short drives. The gentleman was not without shrewdness, and had, with much finessing, effected a horse-trade with Lu's father on the principle announced by Dorcas Briggs, by which commercially he had suffered very gravely. This had quite opened the heart of the horse-trader to him, who, while he may have distrusted his shrewdness, had no suspicion of his designs. He was obviously too weak to be very wicked.

Van Dusen had much suavity and a certain soft way in his address to women, and was supposed by young men to be quite irresistible. He had had much association with females of a class wholly unknown in rural Western Reserve, and, beyond show and glitter, had little idea of what would win the heart of such a girl as Lu. He might dazzle her eyes, excite her curiosity, and pique her fancy. It was possible for him, perhaps, to produce such a glamour in her imagination, that she might suppose she loved him ; and he doubtless calculated, in his estimate of her, that, under its influence, one of her free, impulsive nature would be apt to act very precipitately, regardless of consequences for the time.

The season deepened. The snows and frosts had long disappeared ; and spring came, working all its wonderful charm in wood, field, and warm valley, opening flowers, and swelling leaf-buds. The farmer and the farmer's



boys, all the idlers about Gardner's store and Parker's, were off in the fields or woods, chopping, splitting rails, scoring or hewing timber for new buildings, clearing land, or ploughing. The whole world was moving with new life and bustling activity. The roads were silent and deserted. There were few to see or know as Van Dusen came and went, busy with the meshes he was weaving for the guileless young maiden. He had lingered in this far-away region for nearly two years, which safety may have led him to seek. Ere he deemed it prudent to abandon it, an attraction held him within it. Strong reasons were now urging him to appear again upon fields of action, and Lu must go also. Why should he not bear this lovely creature, with all her possibilities, with him? He had an insidious skill in telling a story, and particularly in describing things and scenes that he had himself witnessed, and gone through with. He began by recounting tales of adventure in the South-west, and descriptions of its scenery and wonderful productions, the romantic exploits of its half-bandit men, and the ventures and risks of its high-spirited women, for their love and devotion. He drew marvellous pictures of life in the cities, — of wealth easily gained and profusely squandered, of beautiful queenly women, gorgeously arrayed in priceless robes, and laden with diamonds and gems, living in gilded palaces, standing in splendid saloons, and receiving the homage of men; and then he would ask her how she liked it, and how she would like so to reign. The young girl kindled, and said she should like it, oh, more than she could tell! If she expressed doubt of the existence of such life, he assured her that it was real, and all within her reach.

With the close of his school Ed Barns went to Cleveland to complete an arrangement with the house of Winslow & Co., in which he invested quite an amount,



inherited from his father, and became a junior partner. It was a large forwarding and commission house, with a branch in Buffalo, and one in Detroit. He remained there until near the end of April, when it was arranged that he should be transferred to the Detroit house, and he returned home on a visit of a few days ere leaving for that then distant point.

Toward evening of the day following his return, he strolled across the woods over north to see Lucille Pettengill. He had not met her since the last day of his school, and felt then that he had parted with her in some sort of a mist very unpleasant to him. He found her alone, and saw the crimson which his approach kindled vanish, followed by an unusual pallor, which soon gave place to a wonted hue. She received him naturally and kindly; yet the young man was at once aware of a change in the young lady (nobody would now think of calling her anything else) herself, — something of womanly reserve, a sort of sweet dignity, which seemed to have added to her height, and which Van Dusen found so puzzling, if not baffling. Lu was glad to see the young man, and let him see that she was. They touched lightly upon the old schoolday times, as there was one ugly thing projecting sharply from the ground covered by them, which both would avoid. As Ed held the warm, shapely hand, it came cuttingly to him that he had ever touched it as an executioner in punishment.

For a long time they dwelt on her reading. She was enthusiastic over Rebecca and Flora McDonald. Had read every thing she had, and much of it twice. Then they came to Ed's self, his prospects and plans.

"And so you are going away," she said a little plaintively. A pause. "I don't wonder. What is there here to keep an ambitious man?" Musingly this was



said, with her eyes in the distance, as if surveying a remote land.

“Not much to keep, certainly, a good deal to come back to,” said the youth, bending his eyes upon her.

“Your sister, your cousin, uncle, and aunt,” answered the unconscious girl. “How happy you must be to have them all!”

“Can you think of nothing else here?” asked the young man a little eagerly, starting toward her, and suddenly checking himself.

“You have lived here so short a time that you can have no attachment to the place,” was her innocent answer.

“None to the place, certainly,” replied the youth coldly, turning from her. Rallying a moment later, he asked her of her pursuits, whom she had seen, where she had been, and all that.

She had seen very few. Her friends had dropped away from her — all but Mr. Van Dusen. He called every few days, and she had ridden out with him two or three times. Ed started a little at this. Two months ago he would have cautioned the thoughtless, friendless girl, the docile pupil; but the calm, dignified woman before him — and then her manner, the readiness and easy way of her speaking of it, compelled him to leave the matter where she dropped it.

He finally reminded her of an old promise to permit him to take her over to his uncle's, and introduce her to his sister Julia and his cousin Mary, and his aunt and uncle. Lu flashed up in her old way at this, and declared her entire readiness to keep her promise whenever he should require it. He had engagements for a day or two; but on the second or third day after, if the weather was fine, as early as one or two he would call for her.



She would be ready.

His sister and cousin would be sure to like her. He had told them all about her, and had promised them to take her over there while he was here, and he wanted they should be good friends. And then he went. As he stepped into the woodpath in the deepening twilight, the light-hearted youth trolled out a lively air.

The thoughtful maiden from her window watched his receding form till the trees and darkness of the woods hid it from her sight, nor till long after the trees had melted into the solid gloom of night did she withdraw her eyes from the direction in which he disappeared.

She did not expect Ed to come for her the next day: on the second he was quite certain to come. It was a beautiful day. She made her arrangements, dressed herself with care after the mid-day dinner, and awaited his arrival. The slow afternoon wore away, and left her alone.

The next, the last day named by him, was warmer and more delightful than its predecessors; and with absolute certainty Lu hurried the dinner, and was ready at half-past twelve.

One, two, three, came, unaccompanied by Mr. Barns.

At four Van Dusen drove up, just on his return from Cleveland, as he explained to her by way of excuse for not calling within the last three or four days. He was weary with his long drive, and too much flurried to notice any thing in her manner, had there been.

He asked her to take a ride with him the next evening.

She told him she would.

“At about half-past four.”

She would be ready.

“I have something to show you.”



“Oh! let me see it now.”

“And something very particular to say to you” —

“Something particular to say to me?”

“Very particular. Can't you guess what it is? Of course you can.”

“I will wait for that till to-morrow.”

She said this a little gravely, Van Dusen thought.



## CHAPTER VI.

A LITTLE before one of the next day, Ed Barns drove up with a pair of dashing horses and light carriage. Lu received him coolly.

"Miss Pettengill," said the youth, "I owe you a thousand apologies for not keeping my word with you. I could not. On the day after I was here I was to meet Capt. Walker at Gen. Ford's, in Burton. When I reached there, I found that Walker had got hurt on the 'Richmond,' and was at Painesville, and I hurried off there. I expected to be back night before last; but I did not get back till one o'clock this morning. I am sure you will excuse me."

"Certainly, Mr. Barns," said the unmoved woman. "Your excuse — and none was needed — is of the best. I am sorry you were put to such inconvenience. So far as I am concerned, it was not of the least consequence."

"I hoped," said the young man, "it would not make any great difference" —

"None in the world," very cool and natural.

"That you would as soon go to-day as on yesterday," anxiously.

"My going at all, Mr. Barns, is of no consequence, and it is impossible for me to go to-day," quite decisively.

"How? Impossible to-day! To-morrow" —

"You have something else to do, Mr. Barns," interrupted she coolly.

"To-night," said the young man sadly, "I must go to Cleveland. Our steamer leaves for Detroit in the morn-



ing, and I must ride all night to reach it in time. Surely you will go with me this afternoon," pleadingly.

"I cannot. I have promised to ride with Mr. Van Dusen this afternoon."

"Mr. Van Dusen?"

"Mr. Van Dusen."

"And you will keep your word with him in preference" —

"I shall keep my word with him. You have no claim on me, Mr. Barns."

"None in the least," said the young man sadly, after a moment's pause. "Miss Pettengill, I may never see you again: may I say one word to you before I go?"

"Any thing, Mr. Barns."

"This Van Dusen — do you know him well?"

"O-o, this Van Dusen! You would speak of him?"

"He is not one for you to intrust yourself to," looking her steadily in the eyes.

"Indeed, Mr. Barns, is it the rule of the school that the girl who rides with him shall be feruled?"

"Oh, my God!" cried the young man, "that unfortunate touch of your hand! You will never forgive me for it!" with exquisite anguish.

"Don't call it unfortunate," said Lu in a voice very soft. "I shall never forget it. It came to me when I needed it," sadly.

"I do not understand you, Miss Pettengill," said Ed eagerly, surprised at her words.

"It is of no consequence. I find people often misunderstand each other."

After a long pause.

"Miss Pettengill," at length, "I had hoped so much from this" — Another pause. "We shall at least part as friends, shall we not?"



“Certainly, on my part.”

“Good-by, Miss Pettengill.”

“Good-by, Mr. Barns.”

And he went.

Van Dusen arrived, a little excited, for some reason, yet he observed something unusual in the look of Lu.

“What is it, Lu?”

“Nothing that you can be interested in, Mr. Van Dusen.”

“I am interested in every thing that concerns you,” quite earnestly.

No answer; and they proceeded to the carriage. Van Dusen drove east to the State Road, and then north to one parallel with that on which Lu lived, rather unfrequented, and which led through a new part of the country, much of which was still covered with forest. Into this Van Dusen turned his horse, and down west. The road, although the new ground was hard, was not very good, and a little care was needed to avoid the stumps that encroached on the track. For three miles there were few houses, and at that season the risk of meeting a traveller on it was the smallest. Their progress was slow, and Van Dusen beguiled the way with a story. It was all about the love-adventure of young Du Barras, a Creole friend of his, who lived near Baton Rouge. He had been horribly mismatched in marriage, ran away North from his wife, met with a lovely girl in a rural region, fell in love with her, but could not marry her, because of his wife. She went off with him, and they lived happily. She was the Mrs. Du Barras of whom he had before told her. This was the tale in short. As it was told by Van Dusen it was a wonderful story, full of romance and moving incident. When he finished it, he asked Lu, who had remained silent, what she thought of it.



"I think that this girl whom you call Viola was a fool. Your Du Barras was a married man and a villain," she replied with spirit. "Are there many such things, such men and women, in the world you have told me of, Mr. Van Dusen?"

"The world is full of them, Lu."

No response.

They had reached, apparently, the western terminus of the highway, where standing trees closed around it, and but a very indistinct trail led into the forest.

"Do you propose to drive any farther?" asked Lu.

"Oh! the road is better a little farther on," he replied.

"Very well. I will not go with you any farther," she coolly answered, preparing to jump from the carriage.

Van Dusen laughed, yet seemed disconcerted, and said he had been misled as to this road. He was told that it was a very good road; that it grew better after leaving the State Road, and he thought he would try it. He turned back, and regained an open space, and paused.

"I told you," he said, that I had something to show you." He pulled from under the seat a beautiful morocco-covered case, which he opened, displaying a pair of pistols and a sheathed bowie-knife, which he carelessly exposed, yet seemed anxious to hide, saying that they were a part of a South-western gentleman's "kit." He took from the case two smaller ones, and, opening, took from one a pair of gold bracelets, from the other a beautiful watch and a long gold chain, which he held up to the bewildered gaze of the astonished girl. The rays of the setting sun fell partly upon them, and they seemed to light up the lonely woods like the kindling of a fire. When Van Dusen stopped and laid down the reins, she took them, and the horse, under her guidance, moved along. As the gilded bracelets met the dazzled eyes of the girl, she dropped the reins, raised her hands, exclaiming, —



"O Mr. Van Dusen! What are these?" and remained silent, lost in amazement and admiration.

"These," said Van Dusen, holding up a pair of pendants, and placing one near the ear of Lu, "are for the ears, of course. How this becomes you!" admiringly. "This is a lady's watch and chain," lifting it, and opening the clasp. "Let me place it around your neck — just once," he said, as, with a flash of her dark eyes, she raised her hand to repulse his attempt.

"They are not for me," she said gravely.

"How do you know?"

No answer.

"They are for the girl I love best in all the world, the only girl I love — that I have ever loved."

"Does she love you?" was the responsive question.

"I hope so, oh, I hope so!" In some way he felt himself repulsed. His story of Du Barras had not been received as he had expected. "You had better drive along," said Lu in a cool voice. In his doubt and indecision he drove on some distance in silence. Suddenly he drew up his horse at a secluded place in the darkening road, on the south side of which lay the forest, and dropped the reins.

"Lucille, I love you madly! You must, you shall, be mine!" in a voice which implored and commanded.

"What do you mean?" demanded the girl, aroused, turning her great flashing eyes on him, in which was not a particle of fear.

"I am the Du Barras of my story. I will have you," dashing the golden chain over her neck with a fierce energy.

"Oh!" cried she, grasping his hands with her own with such sudden and desperate strength as to force them from her, parting the chain at the back of her neck; and,



at the same moment leaping from the carriage, she sprang into the woods, and vanished amid the trees.

Her sudden and determined action took Van Dusen utterly by surprise, and started his horse, which plunged forward. It was a minute or two ere he recovered the reins and control of the animal, and when he did it was several rods from the place where the escapade was made. He secured his horse to a limb, and turned back to look for the fugitive. At the most, he supposed she would stop in the margin of the wood, where he must at all events make his peace with her. His safety might depend on that. He could not find her in the margin of the forest. He ventured in deeper, called her name, proclaimed his regret, asked her pardon in a loud voice, but in vain. He heard and saw nothing of her, and was compelled to abandon the hope of recovering her; and, placing himself in his buggy, he drove slowly back to Parker's. In anticipation of a sudden departure, he had moved his effects to Cleveland, reserving this horse and buggy for his final going, although he was unable to determine just when or how that might be. On his return this evening, he had his horse fed, took some refreshments, said he must go to Cleveland that night, and drove south towards Auburn Corners, for the then most eligible road.

Fortunately the point at which Lu escaped from the carriage was nearly opposite her father's home, a little more than half a mile from the north margins of his fields. She was quite familiar with the woods, through which ran a footpath, leading from a neighborhood on the south line of Newbury, through her father's sugar-camp, and down across the road near their house. The development in her of her womanliness was quite as much of a surprise to her as to others. She was always conscious of a reso-



lute and daring spirit and temper. Her fancy had been excited, and her eyes dazzled, by the tales and splendor of Van Dusen ; but her heart had not been touched, and her fancy lay powerless under her cool will. Van Dusen had totally misapprehended her, as most men and women in the world might. Many minor things in the conversation and conduct of Van Dusen had been noticed by her ; and the few things said of him had not been lost, and especially the words of Ed Barns that afternoon were constantly in her mind ; and Ed had not driven out of her sight, ere she bitterly repented that she had not gone with him. She took her place in Van Dusen's buggy with the determination that it should be the last time she would ever ride with him. She was glad when he turned into the obscure road, as no one would see her with him. She began to feel a vague, uncomfortable suspicion during the recital of his story. At the point where she compelled him to turn about, its meaning was felt by her, and with it the humiliation that she may have received the attentions of a married man, than which nothing could be more offensive to a Yankee girl of that day.

Though dazzled by the display of gems and jewelry which were suddenly flashed on her vision, she was not for a moment shaken. She was spared the slightest apprehension of the worst possible which Van Dusen had resolved upon as the final means of securing and bearing away his victim and prize.

When she gained the forest, her instinct directed her feet toward her father's house. She found the path ere it was too dark to distinguish it, and ran with a speed that would outstrip pursuit, which she did not fear, and soon after she emerged into her father's clearing. Between the outside fence and the house she loitered to gather her thoughts, and regain her composure. An hour after her



escape, apparently unconcerned, she entered her own home, where her father sat alone.

“Where is Ed Barns?” he asked.

“I did not go with him.”

“Where have you been?”

“I went out with Mr. Van Dusen.”

“Oh, you did, heh! Well, I must say for him he is about the poorest jedge of a hoss I ever see.”

“O father! he is a villain! His trade with you was a blind. He’s a married man, and awfully wicked!” She began quite firmly; but her voice broke, and closed with a sob.

Ere her father recovered from his astonishment, she regained composure, and proceeded at once to give her version of the occurrences of the afternoon. Before she ended it, her father arose, got his hat, and, when she concluded, he took up a stout walking-stick, and prepared to go out.

“Where are you going, father?” she asked, a little alarmed.

“Up to Parker’s. I’ll git there by the time he doos,” with a tremor in his voice.

“You must not stir one step. He will not dare speak of this: we must not. Don’t you see, father, that it will be death to me?”

He stood in thought for a moment. “Yes,” he said quietly, and sank into a chair. “O Lu, my poor child!” he cried, holding out his hands to her.

She sprang forward, threw her arms around his neck, and slowly sank to her knees by his side, and burst into sobs.



## CHAPTER VII.

No labor of Deacon Barns in the wide, fallow fields of his new residence provoked so much discussion and opposition as his effort to establish sabbath schools. During the first summer and autumn he had organized two or three in Auburn, and one or two in the south part of Newbury. In this last place they were seriously disturbed, if not broken up. In Auburn the personal presence of the deacon somewhat overawed the opposition. The disturbances were created by some score of rude, noisy young men and boys, who were supposed to be backed and encouraged by several quite well-known men, stanch opposers of Orthodoxy as it was preached in that time. The opposition was aimed more at the Presbyterians than the less numerous and less pretentious Baptists. The winter, with its cold storms and bad roads, had suspended the most of the Sunday schools. With the return of the warm season they were opened with renewed vigor; and the deacon found quite an organized opposition almost in his own neighborhood, and had already taken legal advice, and publicly announced to the disturbers, that, upon a repetition of their offences, they would be prosecuted. This produced considerable excitement; and, on the Sunday following, the schoolhouse, where the principal school was held, was the resort of quite an assemblage of the patrons of the school and their friends, the threatening disturbers, and many drawn by curiosity. The teachers and their pupils took early possession of the house, with their friends, and were anxiously awaiting the hour to commence the exercises.



This was on the Sunday following the incidents of the last chapter. Just before the hour of ten, and when quite a concourse of idlers and loafers was gathered about the house, with noisy groups in and about the doors, a two-horse wagon drove up, containing nine or ten neatly-dressed children, apparently in charge of a young lady, whom nobody at first recognized. Way was made for the carriage, which drove up to the door, and the young woman with her charge entered the building. The unexpected entrance of so many strangers produced a little sensation, as the young girl at their head paused just inside the room, with the bashful children about her in a group, the smaller clinging to her hands and skirts. As she thus stood, and looked timidly and anxiously about, with her wonderful eyes, and fresh, innocent face kindling with a rising flush, the elders in the room, surprised at her entrance, were more surprised at her extreme loveliness. Two young ladies, of quite superior appearance, who were standing with a group of young girls and children, at once went forward to the blushing girl, and bade her good-morning with great cordiality.

“Are either of the Misses Barns here, — Miss Julia, or Miss Mary?” asked the girl.

“I am Julia Barns, and this is Mary,” said the taller of the two.

“Oh! you are the sister of Mr. Edward Barns?” eagerly, and blushing violently.

“Yes, I am Edward Barns’s sister, and this is his cousin Mary,” said Julia vivaciously, unable to take her eyes from the young girl’s face.

“I,” said the flushed girl, dropping her eyes, — “I am Lu Pettengill. I” —

“Lu Pettengill! Are you Lu Pettengill?” more surprised than before, and regarding her with undisguised



admiration. "You blessed angel!" she said, throwing her arms about her, and kissing her lips. "I shall love you at once."

Lu was for a moment overwhelmed at the unexpected warmth of this greeting. She stood in great awe of Ed's sister and cousin. When released by Julia, she was kissed by Mary with scarcely less warmth, and finally said, with tears in her eyes, —

"I have brought these children from our neighborhood. We all want to join your sabbath school."

"We are very glad to have you, and will do every thing we can to make it pleasant for you," said Julia warmly.

At this moment a grave, stoutish, good-looking elderly man came forward from the back part of the room.

"Why — how — who have we here?" he said, looking with open-eyed admiration at Lu.

"This is Lu Pettengill," said Julia; and, turning to the scarcely-recovered girl, "this is my uncle, Deacon Barns."

"Lu Pettengill? Can it be possible!" said the deacon, taking her hand, and never removing his eyes from her face.

"She has brought all these children to our school," said Julia.

"Pardon, Miss Lu," said the deacon, recovering himself. "I was never so surprised in my life. I don't wonder at Ed." Whatever that may have meant.

It was proposed to Lu to become a teacher, which she declined. She came as a scholar, and was finally placed in a Bible-class, with a row of young men and women. She brought her mother's Bible with her, and took her designated place at once; and, after a prayer and hymn, the exercises began.



There had not been much communication between the Pettengill neighborhood and the more southerly settlements of the township; and Lu, except as a name for all that was wild and untamable in girlhood, was unknown in them. Many present had seen her; but not one, in this very lovely, modest girl, at first recognized her. One or two of the outside young men knew her as she entered; and it was soon rumored about among them that she was present, and had entered the house with "a flock of little cusses," as one of the rude ones expressed it. Her presence was disputed by others. A lively curiosity to verify the fact, as well as to see her, and how she comported herself, induced most of those present to enter the house. Sure enough, there she was, sitting with her classmates, modest and demure, with downcast eyes, and a sweet flush on her cheek, and never, in all men's eyes, so beautiful and lovely as now. Was it the presence of this girl whom so many knew, with her Bible, on this lovely May sabbath morning, which appealed to their better instincts? or the threats of Deacon Barns, and the fear of the law? or the advice and the counsels of the more thoughtful of their own fellows and their friends, or of all these together? I know not: I only know that a more orderly and well-behaved assemblage of young men was rarely seen, who, when the exercises closed, with many admiring glances at the unconscious Lu, quietly dispersed. That was the last of the threatened disturbances of the sabbath schools.

After all, the life of Lu was at the best a lonely one. Without brothers or sisters, and living alone with her rather reticent father, the strong, deep qualities of her nature had never been called into action till within the last few months; and she was surprised herself at the new emotions, and unwonted thoughts, the new and at first



strange life that she felt she had entered upon. Long, earnest, and sad was the communion of father and daughter on the evening of her adventure with Van Dusen, and such as they had never had before. For the first time the daughter was revealed to the father, and a revelation it was ; and when she arose from her knees at its close, and stood by him, he looked upon her with emotions of love, admiration, and wonder. Under a careless exterior, he, too, hid the elements of a strong nature ; and his deepest emotions had been quite aroused. He now somewhat realized the neglect in which he had permitted this child to grow up, until he awoke to find her quite beyond his depth and experience, as she had shown herself equal to her own protection, — one to be rather looked up to than controlled or directed.

On the following morning Lu arose grave and firm, and with a sense of greater nearness and tenderness for her father, very sweet to her. There was a religious vein in her nature, which, though often overlain in her hours of wild spirits and gayety, was yet never quite obstructed, nor did it lose all influence over her. Absolute truth, purity, and faith were the real foundations on which her mental and moral structure rested ; and this faith was now to be called into a more active and constant exercise.

That was on Saturday, and during the day she made arrangements which she carried out on this Sunday morning. It cost her much effort to face the Barnses. She had not intended to make any reference to Ed. His name came spontaneously from her lips. She was carried quite out of herself by the warmth of her reception by his relatives, and had hardly recovered when the school was dismissed for the day. Her new friends urged her to remain, and attend the church service in the afternoon. This she could not do, and must return the children to



their homes. She promised to bring them all regularly in the future, and took leave of them for the time.

On the Thursday following the Misses Barns went over and spent the day with Lu, who quite sustained the very favorable impression which she had made upon them. They found her full of bright, original thoughts, which she uttered almost shyly and with much *naïveté*. The quick Julia observed, that, at the mention of the name of her brother by herself or cousin, Lu colored, and became grave; that she was averse to speaking of him, and was apparently not only embarrassed, but pained, by any reference to him. She had been told that he left for the West on the night of his last call upon her, and how disappointed they were at not seeing her at that time. Lu was sorry she could not go with him at that time, but entered into no explanation of the cause which prevented her. She dismissed the subject as soon as possible, with expressing in very warm terms the great obligation she was under to Edward. The cousins afterward recalled that this was the only instance during the day of her making any reference to him; and, recalling much that he had said of Lu, they wondered not a little what could have occurred between them.

Lu, with her children, attended the next sabbath school, as she continued to do. Her presence was the cause of quite constant attendance of several young people, — the youths to see her, and the girls — well, because the boys went, — many of whom, under her example and by her solicitation, joined the class of which she was a member.

During the week following their call on her, Lu spent a day at the Barns homestead, and made the acquaintance of Mrs. Barns, a kind-hearted, genial woman, who did not go out much, and with whom she came to be a favor-



ite. She found a house full of nice furniture, and many luxuries new to her. There were many fine engravings, and one or two paintings. What most attracted her were the books. Here she first saw Shakspeare, and Goldsmith, and "The Spectator." They also had Irving's "Sketch-Book," and Cooper's "Spy," and two or three magazines. It was a delicious day of sweet surprises, — confusions, — which in after-months cleared and took the forms of heartfelt enjoyments and improvements. She found that the awful deacon was one of the most approachable and kindest of men. He would keep his eyes on her, and talk about Ed, which she managed to hear with as little color and distress as possible.

This new life, these new and powerful influences, were precisely what the eager, hungry soul of the young girl most needed; and she enjoyed and improved them to the utmost. The means of her father relieved her from the necessity of labor; and partly to save her, and partly to furnish her with a companion, he hired her friend Sue Brown to take charge of the house. This enabled Lu to enter upon a somewhat systematic course of study and reading, under the direction of Julia Barns, who took upon herself the pleasant task of instructing her. In this way the summer and autumn glided rapidly towards the close of the year.

As may be supposed, many of the young admirers and followers of Lu fell away from her. She was rarely at home on Sunday; and, although she had not joined the church, it was said that she had become pious. She kept up, so far as it depended on her, all her acquaintances; and the development of her real womanhood, with the rapidly ripening hand of time, greatly improved her beauty and charm of manner. Yet she had suddenly passed out of her old circle beyond them. The most of



them stood looking regretfully after her. A few of the better endowed and more fortunate, attracted by her, went with her.

The sporting enterprise of the then West had established a race-course near Cleveland, and late in that autumn Alf Lee attended the races. There he met Van Dusen, with two or three gamblers from the South-west. One of these, whom Alf half cultivated, told him something of the history of that gentleman. He was a native of New York. His real name was Van Camp. He went South in early youth, well recommended; had finally married the daughter of a wealthy man whom he robbed, and then deserted his wife, and became a gambler. Some two years before, he had committed an act which outlawed him from the sporting world, as he was already banished from the other. He disappeared until within the last few months, when the death of the party whom he had injured enabled him to return to some of his old haunts. Soon after learning these facts, Alf met Van Dusen, against whom he seemed to have a grudge, in a drinking-place, at a gambling-hole. Alf said something to him, and threw a glass of brandy and water into his face, when Van Dusen drew a knife. Before he could use it, Alf dealt him a powerful blow, which knocked him insensible. This occurred at a place where even a murder would have hardly provoked an arrest, and Alf walked away. When Van Dusen recovered, he disappeared, and was not heard of again in Ohio. Some rumor of Alf's meeting him reached Parker's, greatly exaggerating what occurred between them; but nobody save himself, and possibly Uncle Pettengill, ever knew the real cause of his assault.



## CHAPTER VIII.

TIME ran on till the close of the ensuing summer. Ed Barns had been home for three weeks during winter. At that time Lu was absent with her father to visit an uncle's family on the Holland Purchase, as the western part of New York was then called, and had gone back to Detroit before their return.

This summer was one of much ill health, and sickness was quite prevalent through Southern Geauga, visiting and severely afflicting the Barnses. Both of the girls were ill, Julia quite seriously. Not long after, Mrs. Barns was taken. From the first, hers was a severe case. She had been slenderly for many years, and was illy prepared to resist the malarious form of disease, incident to the state of the country, then prevailing.

Lu went at once to their assistance, and remained with them quite constantly through the whole period. Edward was written to, and unfortunately was absent up the Lakes, on business. Mary was confined but a few days; and Julia soon threw off the disease, and began to mend early in September. From the first, the case of her aunt was critical. She grew rapidly worse; and a council of physicians, composed of old Dr. Goodwin, Dr. Ludlow, and Dr. Shepherd, pronounced her hopeless of recovery.

When Ed reached home one afternoon, it was to find his aunt very low, with a prospect that she could hold out but a day or two. She had been to him a mother, receiving him an infant from his dying mother's arms. He and Julia, then but two or three years old, had been at once



taken by herself and husband, and reared as their own. The intelligence of her illness reached him at Chicago, and he left at once. At Detroit he found another letter, announcing her hopeless condition; and he hurried back on board the same steamer that brought him from Chicago. He found Mary and Lu with his aunt, who could do little more than recognize him. As he sank on his knees by her bedside, something he heard of her murmured words in which he once or twice caught the name of Lu. She soon after lost the power of speech; and, as the next dawn began to kindle, she ceased to breathe.

Towards evening of the fourth day after the funeral, Ed went to take leave of Lu. He was compelled to return without time to mourn the dead, or console the living. Knowing and loving his aunt as a mother, the blow which dissolved the band of a beautiful household fell upon him with unusual severity. Robust manhood at twenty-five, with all the affections of health, and all the springs and sources of life and ambition fresh and strong, may mourn deeply, and regret lastingly, but it cannot walk in darkness far. The night of its anguish for even the loss of a mother cannot last long. Distracted and overwhelmed as he was by the loss of his aunt-mother, he had nevertheless observed Lu. Through all the bitterness and sorrow of the household, she had been the one ray of earthly light and consolation. His strong, robust uncle was completely prostrated by the blow, and seemed to have no other stay or comforter. He would have her with the immediate mourners, and insisted that she should stand and walk by him. He was reminded that she could not take precedence of his daughter, and yielded. Julia was still too ill to be present at the funeral, and Lu took her place with Edward. She was now quite perfected in her virginal loveliness, and it was impossible she should



escape general observation, even at a funeral; and now in sables, on the arm of Edward, she was an especial object of notice and observation. Poor, unconscious girl! she had never known a mother; and the tender, intense yearning of her whole nature for a mother's love had only within the last few months, found rest and joy in the love of her she now mourned as sincerely, and almost as profoundly, as those bound to her by natural ties. Ed was a very fine, manly youth, fresh, and intellectual; and the two could but be noticed and admired, especially by the sympathetic women and girls, with whom Mrs. Barns and the young ladies were immensely popular. Even the unbelieving Dorcas Briggs said, "I give it up now!" The remains were consigned to earth, the mourners returned, and the tender, thoughtful Lucille remained, ministering as she might, for two days after. On the third her father came and carried her home.

What days of tender unreserve were these! Ed conducted her to the carriage, and on the way asked if he might come over the next day, and say good-by, as he must go on the following morning.

Of course he might, if he wished.

He did, very much.

During this day he had a long conversation with Julia, carried on in low, earnest voices. At one time she said to him, "I cannot tell you a word about it: you must find out for yourself. I would not even tell you what I think, if I had any decided thoughts. You know what we all wish. It was the dying wish of our aunt."

"I know," said the young man gravely. "If wishes could win, how happy we would all be in this world!" rising, and walking rather sadly away.

And now he was on his way on his leave-taking mission. He had lingered all day, till late, and had more than once



been reminded of it by Mary. Did he prefer the kindly shadow of evening? Did he for any reason wish to avoid her presence, as fearing the result? I cannot tell. I only know that the day was well spent when he emerged from the woods in the rear of his old schoolhouse, where he paused for a few moments before turning his steps along the road to Mr. Pettengill's house, a fourth of a mile distant. On approaching it, he found the appearance of things at Lu's homestead greatly changed. The house and blinds were newly painted, the yard was paled in neatly, and a general air of care and taste pervaded the whole. He saw Lu in the yard, pulling weeds and grass from among her flowers, — a labor which her recent absence had made quite necessary. As she arose from a bending position, at his approach, he very plainly saw a heightened color in her face, and managed to mark how it gave place to an unwonted pallor soon after, which, in turn, yielded to the usual healthful hue. She merely arose, and stood by the margin of a flower-bed until he came to her, when, after a few commonplace words, he aided her in completing her task with her flowers. From there they sauntered to a peach-tree bending under its burden of ripe early Yorks. Delicious as they were, the young man did not even care to attempt one, and they moved around to a little porch on the east side, whose posts and trellis-work were hidden with thick vines still in rank leafage. Lu invited her visitor to a seat under the porch; but he contented himself with one on the projecting floor, while she sat down on a low chair.

“Lu,” said the young man as if carelessly, “do you remember the last time I was here?”

“I think I do,” answered the girl a little uneasily. The young man seemed not to notice her manner, and went on: —



"I came on purpose to take you over to our house. I had been obliged to break my word to come the day before, and you would not go with me, for my punishment."

"And my own, Mr. Barns," in a tone that brought his eyes, which had purposely wandered from her face, back to it. "I should have gone with you; and, after you left me, I repented. I would have run after you, if I could have found my bonnet."

As she lifted her eyes at the close of this frank confession, the eyes of the youth turned away again to hide the expression which he knew her words had produced in them.

"It is well you had mislaid it," he replied with affected persiflage. "Had you gone with me then, I should certainly have said a great deal of nonsense to you. I should have told you of all my folly—all my love for you," with his eyes still from her.

"Mr. Barns," said the young girl after a start, with something cold and severe in her tone, which brought his eyes back at once, "surely you are not authorized to speak to me in this light way."

"In this light way! Not authorized!" cried the youth, springing to his feet, and approaching her almost impetuously. "Not authorized? My love is its own authority. O Lucille!" now beyond all restraint, "I love you. I have always loved you, not lightly, deeply, profoundly, with heart and soul." A pause. "You shrank from me, chilled me, almost killed me with your indifference."

When he arose and turned to her, with this burst of vehement passion, the young girl covered her face with her hands, and bent with uncontrollable agitation. When he ceased, she remained bowed, with tear-drops stealing through her fingers, and falling.

"O Lucille!" with a repentant voice. "I have



frightened, I have offended you. Surely such love as mine will not hurt you. It would only serve and cherish you." This he said bending over her. In her silence he still bent lower and nearer her. He ventured to take one of the small wrists, as if to remove the hand. The tears had quite ceased; but the hand would not yield to the very gentle force applied to it. Slowly he sank by her side, on his knees, only to be nearer her.

"Lu — Lucille, Miss Pettengill — tell me I have not offended you. You will forgive me?" No answer. His left arm somehow found its way around a slender waist, which did yield a little to the gentle drawing of the youth towards himself.

"Miss Pettengill?"

"Call me Lu," very small, from between the fingers.

"Lu, sweetest, dearest Lu, you do love me — some — just a little?"

This was said to the little pinky shell-like ear. The hand had yielded, had been kissed. A delicate, peachy cheek was exposed, and the lips fastened on it. Slowly the young, warm, tear-stained cheek turned, till two ripe lips just touched his own, and brushed through a very love of a whisker that adorned a manly cheek, and went down on his shoulder, and an arm very gently and very palpably circled his neck.

"O Edward" from the shoulder. "I do love you — not a little — with my whole heart."

Then came sobs, at first quick and violent. The youth did not attempt to check them. He supported her in his arms, and merely sought to soothe her. When he attempted to speak, his voice was broken with emotion, and his own tears had mingled with hers. It was less than a minute; and Lu, controlling herself, lifted her head, still drooping. "O Edward! you will not love me the less for this giving myself so utterly away in an instant?"



“Not love you the less! What do you mean, dearest?”

“Why, at your first word,” still hiding her hot cheek, “I was so utterly surprised! I could not help it, Edward,” plaintively.

“Did you not know, had it never occurred to you, that I loved you? Did you never dream it?”

“I had never dreamed it; and I was so ashamed to have loved you—there, Edward! you know it all now.” And she became mute, with her head quite erect, and her face now a little pallid.

“Do I know it all, you precious? You shall tell it all to me. I loved you, Lu, or I began to, from the night I first met you at Webster’s.”

“Indeed! Did you?” eagerly.

“In very deed, Lucille.”

“Bless you! Bless you! It always seemed to me such a sin and shame for a girl to lose her heart before it was asked,” she said. “I did not know when mine was gone, nor how. When I first met you, Edward, I thought you were plain. The more I saw you, the better your face pleased me, until you were my ideal. I never thought it was love. I thought that, when it came, would be sudden-striking, that one would know at once. My love for you was like sinking into deep, sweet sleep and dreams of heaven, when I thought I was awake all the time. That thing that happened in school awoke me, and I knew I had been all the time dreaming.”

“O Lu! will you ever forgive me for that?”

“I did forgive you ere you punished me.”

“I had to do it. I loved you then, Lu—knew I did. I felt guilty over it, thinking everybody knew it. I must seem to strike this precious little hand,” kissing its pinky palm. “I would have sooner struck my own hand off. When I went to your house that night, it was with the de-



termination to tell you how I loved you, so that you might see and know all, why I did it. How coldly and proudly you met me! and yet how you rushed between me and your father! and then you stole away. When I next saw you, you seemed changed. Up till then I thought you loved me, your heart was mine."

"And I, Edward, only awoke to know that I—that I did love you; and somehow I thought and felt that you did not, could not, love me, or you would have spared me. I was not a woman to be loved (no man would strike the woman he loved): I was only a child to be punished, disgraced. I never got over that idea till now."

"How strange, Lu, that we should have so misapprehended each other!"

"It seems strange now: it was very reasonable then."

"And yet Julia and Mary knew what my feelings were towards you, Lucille."

"So I see now. But when they hinted something to me, I repelled it, and"—

"They both thought as did I, that you had no lover-like feeling for me. I intended to tell you frankly and truly my whole heart before I went away last year. I thought it was due to you to know what my feelings were. I should have done it when I last came for you; but you know what occurred between us."

"I remember it as well as you can; and, Edward, one of the very reasons why I refused to go with you—for I did not much care for my promise to that man—was the fear that in some way I should betray my real feelings to you. I should have died had that happened."

"No, you would not, Lu. I should have anticipated you. Besides, what could it have mattered? a true lover's heart and arms would have received you. And I would only have loved you the more. How sweet and precious it would have been!"



"I have behaved badly enough now, Edward," as if not well pleased with herself. "I want to tell you what happened to me on the evening after you left me. Oh, you must have a seat! Have you been all this time on your knees?"

"All the time on my knees to you — why not? And what a blessing has been mine!"

"When you kneel again, Edward, I shall kneel with you."

The young man arose; and when he was seated, as much to his liking as circumstances and Lu permitted, she frankly told him of her adventure with Van Dusen.

It was humiliating and most painful to the poor child, and she told it simply and bravely as the reader knows it. Surprise, anger, terror, and wrath ruled her listener, as he took in the details and possibilities disclosed to him. He was unable to retain his seat, and strode about the little porch intensely excited.

"Alone with that villain at a remote and secluded place, with night, the forest, and he armed? O Lucille! My God, my God! What an escape! What a heroine you are, Lucille!" rushing back, and throwing his arms about her. "I will never leave you alone again for a minute." As his wrath subsided, she told him of making her way home, and recounting the story to her father.

Day had lain down and died its rosy death in the west, and the full, yellow moon was looking placidly upon the lovers, quite high up in the east, ere this stage of their memorable interview was reached.

"This little hand," said Ed, lifting it in one of his own, and laying it upon the other, "which I tried to strike, and could not, this is to be mine, is it not, dearest?"

"You have it now, have you not, love?"



“I am, then, to keep it with all that it promises?”

“With all that it promises.”

“And this shall be our mutual pledge,” said the young man with fervor, pressing his lips upon lips that frankly met them.

Sue had her tea ready for some time. She knew that Ed and Lu were on the porch. She watched for the approach of Mr. Pettengill, who had gone over to the State Road; and he was certain to go around, and enter by that porch. It was dark when he reached the front-gate. She ran and intercepted him.

“Oh, you must not go round there!” looking very wise.

“Why, Sue?”

“Lu and Mr. Barns are around there.”

“What are they doing round there?”

“What do you suppose, Mr. Pettengill? I think they are making a trade; and, if they do, oh! won't it be glorious?” much excited.

Uncle Pet reserved his opinion until he should be better informed, and walked gravely in at the front-door, produced a Geauga “Republican and Whig,” and sat down to its weekly hash. The pleased and expectant Sue, who could neither sit nor stand, finally consulted Uncle Pet as to the propriety of calling them in to tea; and when he finally concurred, she approached the door with many preliminary sounds, after the manner of the considerate Mrs. Nickelby, to announce her approach. She came just as the compact had been sealed, as I have described, and was blessed with the sight of the lovers standing very near each other.

“What is it, Sue?” asked Lu, as she appeared in the open door.

“Ahem! tea is ready. Your father has been home some time.”



"My father! Oh! I forgot."

"Good-evening, Miss Brown," said Ed, advancing very cordially. "How do you do?" giving her his hand. "Will you ask Mr. Pettengill to step this way?" Lu maintained her ground by her lover.

"Mr. Pettengill," said the young man, upon the appearance of Lu's father in the moonlight, "I entertain the most devoted attachment for your daughter; and she has just assured me that it is fully reciprocated. We have promised ourselves to each other. I am quite in a condition to make her a home—will you permit me to become her husband?"

"It is a very grave thing, it is, to marry, Mr. Barns. I have no doubt you have quite made up your minds," he answered.

"I know I have wanted her for my wife ever since I first saw her. I did not know that I had much chance with her till now," Ed answered very earnestly.

"I lost 'er mother," said Uncle Pet, "before she was two year old, and I never thought of another wife."

"Of course you did not," replied the youth: "she was like her daughter," very confidently and decidedly.

"Lu," said her father, addressing her, "do you love this young man well enough to go and make a new home with him?"

"O father!" putting an arm about him, "you will go with me. I love him very, very much. More than I can say."

"It is perfectly right, my children. I've had a notion how it would turn out with you two," said the sagacious man. "There, there, that will do," returning Lu's kiss, and cordially shaking the young man's proffered hand. "You are at home here, Mr. Barns, and Sue's tea a-coolin'."



On their way in, Sue had Lu to herself for a moment, and pressed and kissed her with an energy that her lover had not ventured to exercise towards her, ardent and fervent as he was.

Had any one told Ed that night, at the tea-table where Lu presided, that she could ever do it more perfectly and gracefully, he would have been incredulous. Had one told him that the time would ever come when he would observe every motion of her person, every varying shade of smile, glance, and expression of her face, with abated interest, he would have smiled in silent derision. It would be a difficult thing to imagine a prettier picture than this virginal love, sitting at the small tea-table, with her father opposite, her lover at her right, and Sue in a subdued state of chronic blush, laugh, and titter. Sitting in profile to Ed, his ardent admiration was less embarrassing to her, with her splendid head a little bent under the weight of her happiness, and her face, never over-colored, changing with the varying flush of her still fluttering heart, with her lifting and dropping eyes, and low-spoken words.

O Ed! your fruit is in its untouched dew, its first bloom. It never can be lovelier. Beware to clutch it too eagerly, though no rudeness can rob it of its inherent delicacy and flavor.

He did not return to his uncle's that night. He did not start for Detroit the next morning.

"Should you not go?" queried the conscientious Lu. "Is it not your duty?"

"Is it my duty? Think what a change I have met since my plans were made, — a change involving our two lives, from which a new home, new lives it may be, will spring. Should I not withdraw two or three days from not very urgent old business to these newer and infinitely



greater interests? Surely, dearest, we may have a little time to make each other's acquaintance. Duty, indeed! I think my duty now is here," placing himself by her side. The young girl had nothing to oppose to this cogent putting of the case, so naturally and manfully was it done, and such exquisite pleasure did the thought of his prolonged stay give her — two or three whole days!

Stricken sorely as was the household of Deacon Barns, its inmates, including the deacon, felt a very abiding interest in Ed's visit to Lu.

When it was known in the morning that he did not return the night before, this interest had a touch of anxiety in it.

"He will not go to Cleveland to-day," said the deacon: "that's certain."

"He may have gone," suggested Mary.

"Perhaps he got lost going through the woods," said Julia, smiling.

"I think he'll find himself all right," said the deacon, showing that this would relieve him considerably. "There is no doubt he went on that errand, before he went away last year. He was very much taken with her, I'm sure."

"But you are to remember, father, that there is another party in the case. A man can't alway have it his own way."

"And that he was in some way rebuffed, and went off under a cloud," added Julia. The girls never heard of the attentions of Van Dusen to Lucille.

"But didn't Lu come right straight to us?" asked the deacon.

"She came to sabbath school, and inquired for us," said Mary; "but she would never answer either of us a word about Ed, nor has he ever confided much to us."

"She is a deep girl," said Julia, "and proud and sen-



sitive. If she really loves Ed, as I think she does, she would act just as she has till Ed asks her."

"Glory!" exclaimed Mary, jumping up, and running to the door. "Here they come! — Ed and Lu, and Lu's father driving the carriage. It must be all right!" running, and throwing open the large gate.

As the reader knows, it was all right.

I would like to linger over it and tell of what followed, — the happy tears and kisses of the girls, deepened by the shadow of their great loss; how the deacon in a hearty way took Lu in his arms and blessed her, and shook hands with Uncle Pet three or four times.

"Here's one trade you and I have made, Mr. Pettengill," he said: "I trade my nephew-son for your daughter. What do you say to it?"

"That it is a pretty fair bargain, in which both on us have the best on't. It was a trade that swopped itself, though; I reckon, Deacon Barns."

"Yes, father," said Lu, with a little sparkle of her old archness, alway so fascinating, "I believe you never made one whittling in the whole of it."

"No: I should ha' been a clumsy hand at carvin' a heart, if I'd 'a tried."

That was Friday morning, and Lu's father took Ed to Cleveland the following Sunday afternoon.

The life of Lu was fortunate and happy; but the memory of the hours from the approach of Ed to her, on that memorable evening, till the hour of his leaving her, remained first and sweetest in her memory.

They were married the ensuing Christmas Eve. A great ball was given at Parker's on the following New Year, where I met them. I knew Uncle Pet quite well, had seen Lu many times in her wild state, and, save by the occasional turn and flash of her splendid eyes, I could



see nothing to identify her with the lovely and stylish woman before me. During the evening I observed her near the music-stand, showing Alf a very beautiful watch and chain, the gift of her husband. I stood near, and heard her say to him that he had been one of the truest friends she had ever had.

I also saw Dorcas and Miss Bradley there with their set, but did not hear their comments.

A year or two afterwards Barns removed from Detroit to Cleveland. Under his influence Uncle Pet sold his farm in Auburn, and invested the proceeds in property near the city, which became very valuable, and was long since swallowed up by the devouring town, and the old man became rich.

During the first summer of my residence in Cleveland I wanted to see Uncle Pet, who, I was told, was an important witness in a land case in Geauga, in which I was engaged. At the office of Barns & Co., on the river, I was referred to the residence of the head of the firm on Prospect Street. The bell at a very beautiful house was answered by the mistress in person, a tall, commanding, and one of the few really beautiful women I had ever seen. She knew me; and her frank, gracious manner helped me to identify her.

"Can this be Lu Pettengill?" I asked involuntarily.

"I am Lu Pettengill," with the old saucy flash of her eyes.

She invited me in, seemed glad to see me, showed me her children, — Ed, a fine boy of eight, and Lu, a wild little romp of five, with the eyes of the mother. We had a pleasant talk of old Geauga times. To my inquiry of her father, she said she thought I would find him at Greer's Stable on Bank Street, and added with a laugh, that she presumed there was "a horse-trade on foot, as he went off with a bit of pine in his hand."



When I found him at the indicated point, he was putting the last touch to an Indian hatchet and a dealer in horses at the same time. Subsequently Lu, with her husband, son, and daughter, made the tour of Europe; and she was everywhere acknowledged as one of the most beautiful of American women.







# EDITH GROVER.

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## CHAPTER I.

GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF A RIDE IN AN OLD-FASHIONED  
STAGE-COACH, WHICH ONLY GIVES COLOR.

HAD any one witnessed the first meeting of Miss Grover and the young M.D., he would have supposed even a slight acquaintance impossible between them. At that time Dr. Field had been at the Corners three or four months ; and no young man in all the country ever secured a worse reputation in so short a time, — a fact of which he seemed unaware. It was very much against him that he was at the Corners at all. It was a geographical centre of quite a populous region, having no resident physician, and with roads crossing, which rendered it eligible ; but no little village in the three counties cornering near there had so hard a name.

In addition to the then common vices of excessive drinking, profanity, and the coarseness of the average people of that early day, men more than suspected of being engaged in the crimes of passing counterfeit money, horse-stealing, and the offences peculiar to new communities, — men who wore good clothes, rode good horses, and had plenty of money, and about whom common folk knew



little, — found harborage there, with whom the popular voice associated the doctor. He boarded at one of the not very reputable taverns of the burg, was said to be intemperate, and had signalized his advent with an abusive assault upon an old and widely-esteemed physician of the neighborhood, with whom he had been called into consultation over a badly fractured limb of one of the Wilkins boys, and it was said that he drove the elder doctor away from his patient. There was also a tale of scandal, connecting his name with a young girl who had recently made her appearance at the Corners with a baby in her arms, seeking him, from a distant part of the country; and it was certain that he carried her and her child away openly.

It was even said that he doctored cows and horses, — a matter for the unsparing sarcasm of old Dr. Warren, whom he assaulted, and of Dr. Palmer, who had for years monopolized the practice of a wide region. These physicians, however much and often they quarrelled with each other, were close allies against all medical poachers on their preserves, and gave wide circulation to all the rumors adverse to young Field.

In the afternoon of a dismal, rainy day late in September, the heavy, lumbering stage-coach drew up at the stage-house at the Corners; and, just as it was moving off again, the driver was hailed to stop for Dr. Field. In the closed carriage he had a single passenger, — Miss Grover, on her way home from a two or three weeks' visit with friends in Warren. She had never met Dr. Field; but both of the medical gentlemen referred to were on pleasant terms at her father's house, some four miles distant; and she had heard all the stories concerning the proposed passenger, in their latest and most embellished forms. She occupied the back-seat; and the odious name reached



her ear, awakening the abhorrence of a pure woman of refinement for a man of such a reputation.

The coach stopped ; and the young man, in the hurried manner of one who wished to occasion the least delay, opened the door and sprang in, when he became for the first time aware of the presence of a lady, and knew at once that it must be Miss Grover by the description he had before received of her. His entrance was hasty ; but he lifted his hat with, " I beg pardon for my rudeness," in a voice and with a grace that would in an ordinary man have atoned the offence, and won favor. He placed himself on the front-seat, facing the young lady. She was no prude. Her sense of propriety was not aggressive. No flash of virtuous scorn lit up her eyes, nor was there an alarmed ruffle of draperies ; but with her face to the window, and a cold, serene indifference, she seemed utterly unaware of the entrance or of the presence of the young man. She apparently neither saw his person, nor heard his voice, was as unconscious of his existence as if he had never taken form. At first he could not but choose to look at her. No man could. Few were so worthy to be seen, or would better reward a study.

The stage resumed its course ; and mean houses, log barns, squalid hovels, crooked rail fences, stumpy fields, the rudest outside thing which they passed, was of vastly more interest to the absorbed young lady than the young gentleman so near her, and who in his person was for his sex scarcely less striking than herself. For nearly a mile an ungloved, unjewelled hand, fair and beautiful, lay carelessly over the broad strap in front of the lady, which formed the back for the unoccupied middle seat. This was suddenly withdrawn from sight. Its exposure was, in fact, a sort of treason : it in a way gave aid and comfort to the enemy. The young doctor could not help but study it.



Whatever were the vices and faults of the young man, quickness and keenness of perception, and manly sensibility, were among his qualities. He had hardly possessed himself of his seat, ere the atmosphere which congealed the young lady was fully appreciated by him; and with a psychological acuteness, the gift of some minds, he was quite aware that he was the cause of the low temperature. For a moment an increase of color came to his pale face, and slowly died out of it. He quite comprehended the situation, and with the fine instinct of the gentleman, resolving that this enforced companionship should occasion the least annoyance possible to the lady, he turned quietly from her, and devoted himself to an absorbing study of the outside world from the window most remote from her.

The first mile was a steady ascent, and from the summit there was a down-hill of two more to the river road, on which the stage would turn; and Miss Grover would leave it three-fourths of a mile beyond the corner, when it would cross the river on its way to Cleveland. Was the time of this passage long, or short, to the travellers? Did they, in fact, withdraw themselves so remotely asunder? Was the flush on the face of the young man one of shame under a consciousness that he merited severe indifference from the pure of the sex? or was it anger or aroused pride? What occupied the thoughts of either? Perhaps we shall never know. I shall attempt to relate only what was said and done. Whatever may have been the subject of the young man's thoughts, his conduct seemed to be governed by considerations of what, under all circumstances, is due from man to woman, though I fear it may not meet the approbation of some quite young gentlemen of this day.

At length the stage drew up at the point where the lady



was to leave it, near which stood an open one-horse wagon, driven by a small boy, which would convey her home. As the coach stopped, Dr. Field quietly disengaged the broad strap referred to, turned back the middle seat which obstructed her passage, opened and held the door for Miss Grover's exit, and stood with a proffered hand to aid her descent. Coldly she stepped down to the ground, as sublimely unconscious of his presence as before he entered the carriage. The stage had gone a mile out of its regular route to deliver her at this point. The driver was wet, weary, and cross. He surlily removed her trunk from the stage-boot, set it by the roadside, and remounted his box. The boy and young lady approached the trunk, apparently too heavy for their united strength. She was about to make the effort to raise it into the wagon, when, in an indescribable manner to which few men were equal, Dr. Field, who had not entered the coach, intervened.

"It is a man's right," he said, "to relieve a woman of such labor."

The voice, though low and soft, had nevertheless a man's masterful will in it, and his air most respectful, assertive, and commanding, as well. The young lady was taken by surprise, and, as every woman would, instinctively acknowledged his claim, and made way for him.

The heavy trunk seemed to rise at his touch, and take its place in the Grover wagon, when without a look at the still surprised young woman, or giving her a chance to thank him had she wished to, he relieved her of the embarrassment of her position, and sprang back to the stage. With a sharp word of reproof to the driver for his churlishness, he re-entered it, and was driven away.

The young woman, with suffused cheeks, silently took a seat in the wagon by the side of the pygmy driver, who, to make sure of the reins, had scrambled in, secured them, and, whip in hand, was ready for a start homeward.



“George, why did not some one else come for me?” she asked a little sharply.

“’Cos I come,” was the prompt answer.

“Oh, I see! so you did. But why did not some one come with you? Where is Mr. Edwards?”

“Gone to Cleveland.”

“Where was my father?”

“Oh! he went with Edwards.”

“Where was Walter? He might have come with you.”

“Walter’s been havin’ one o’ his turns, you know.”

“Oh, dear!” with a sudden sinking of the heart.

“Didn’t Dr. Field put in the trunk, I’d like to know?” asked the urchin, who felt these questions to be so many personal reflections.

“Yes; but if he had not?”

“I guess we could a’ took out yer things, and sot the trunk in, and put ’em in agin; couldn’t we?”

“Of course, George. How inventive you are! I should not have thought of that. You are a genius, George,” smiling.

“I hope Dr. Field will lick that ’are driver, though. He told him he deserved a thrashin’,” said George, quite placated.

The young lady then asked about her mother, and the details of home-life in her absence, and made inquiries of George’s mother and the baby. They soon gained the summit of a swell which commanded a view of the Grover mansion and the fair, wide domain that lay about it. Its western boundary was the beautiful Chagrin River, which, flowing among hills and highlands, has no marshes on its borders. On that side it made a wide sweep around, with a northern course toward the lake, twenty miles away. Some hundreds of acres of cultivated land, in every stage of improvement, from the rude, stumpy new clearing on



the distant margin of the receding forest, to the beautiful lawn surrounding the house, in the midst of wide sweeps of pasture-lands, shorn, stubbly wheat-fields, large expanses of corn, extensive orchards, and broad river-meadows, the whole sloping toward the river, traversed here and there with silvery threads of spring brooks, finding their sources in the high lands, and their limpid courses to the river, with many liquid whispers and murmurs. Occasional groves of a second growth of native forest-trees gave fine effect to the whole, with many gentle swells of the surface, all inclining to the west and south; and now, as the western clouds opened golden doors to the late afternoon sun, the whole lighted up under the appreciative eyes of the home-journeying girl with a radiance of light, color, and warmth, which quite dispelled the something more than vexation, if not of humiliation, of the last half-hour. There, surrounded with a tastefully planted-out growth of maple, elm, and ash, crowning a natural swell of the grounds, the fourth of a mile from the highway, was the mansion-house, — the centre constructed of the finest of Ohio freestone, with wings of brick, — and the spacious stables, barns, and outbuildings of one of the wealthiest farmers (if such her father was to be called) of the then West. From its front to the west, the eyes of the maiden wandered with a fond admiration over the intervening domain, to the river that flowed under the shadow of a maple-forest that stood in its primitive grandeur on the high, and, in many places, abrupt western bank. She had been absent but three weeks, and was surprised at the warm glow of pleasure with which she returned.



## CHAPTER II.

## GIVES A PLEASANT ACCOUNT OF THE GROVERS.

WILLIAM WALTER GROVER was an offshoot of an old Massachusetts strain of men, of hard, vigorous sense, and thrifty lives. Several generations of the males graduated from youths of wildness to manhoods of success and usefulness. They stood strong and well in their several generations. No one of them ever achieved that prominent success which often dwarfs a successor, as no one fell below the Grover standard of fair eminence, while all together had accumulated a stock of credit which made a family inheritance of honor and consideration. William Walter followed the family rule. For his day, he had a fair academic education, rather surpassed the family reputation for wildness, and barely escaped grave errors in his early manhood. His fortunate marriage with a young woman of rare personal advantages, exceptional mental endowments, and force of character, to whom he was attached with the strength of his tenacious race, was the principal means of giving that bent to his life and fortunes which so invariably attended the careers of his predecessors. His own patrimony mostly disappeared with his youth. His wife had inherited a fine tract of land in the woods of the Western Reserve, and he was endowed with a vigorous, working enterprise and ambition, and commanded ready means enough to gather teams, wagons, drivers, laborers, and goods, with which he traversed the hundreds of intervening miles, and es-



tablished himself in the forest that encumbered every foot of the domain. That was more than twenty years before the opening of this tale. A part of the land was sold on advantageous terms, and the proceeds devoted to the improvement of the residue. The sagacious and enterprising are usually the lucky. Fortune is apt to find them out, and range on their side. These twenty odd years had translated the forest-land into the rich and cultivated estate which we glanced over a few minutes ago. Farming by no means wholly absorbed Mr. Grover, or all of his now largely increased capital. He early invested in the infant city of Cleveland, owned extensively in vessel property on the lakes, was a holder of bank stock, director in one bank, and widely and favorably known. He was also a sagacious, public-spirited man, and gave large influence to the various enterprises for the development of the New-England colony that was so deeply striking its roots into the soil, and extending its influence widely over the young State of which it was an important part. He was of a fine and commanding person and popular address, and had more than once been urged, though not tempted, to enter the often disastrous vortex of politics as a candidate for office.

Mrs. Grover developed into the accomplished matron. More intellectual than her husband, with literary tastes and instincts, she was a vast aid to him on the mental and spiritual side of his nature, and contributed to a certain elevation of character which redeemed him from the sordid pursuit of mere money-getting; and his enlightened efforts in behalf of schools and the higher institutions of learning, which distinguished the first settlers of the Reserve, were due to her influence. The most charitable of women and the most approachable, she never entirely forgot that she was of an old colonial family of honor-



able historic mention. After the birth of her second child, she never recovered the full vigor of her former health. The recoil of the pain, and the shadow of the peril of that event, never entirely disappeared. Her step lingered, her spirit flagged, though she escaped the chain of invalidism, or felt its weight but lightly.

Edith was nearly three years of age, a bright, rollicking child, with immense dark eyes, olive skin, and almost black hair, when she was carried into the woods; from seven to fourteen an awful tomboy, as her father's daughter needs must be; at seventeen, a tall, dark, splendid girl, with a good deal of the spirit of the Grover youths at that age. In person she developed slowly,—one of those women rare in promise, who, however much they change, never fade. At this age, having received the best that the infant State could do for her, she was sent East to complete her education, as what one gathers at school is called. Her opportunities were not neglected. On her return home, she quite realized the expectations of her parents, and, wherever she appeared, was as near a sensation as that staid time permitted a maiden to be.

A new jaunty bark sailed out of Cleveland as the "Edith," and her full name was borne on the wheelhouse of a famous lake steamer a twelvemonth later. At the beginning of this tale she was twenty-three; tall, and realizing that rare union of supple lightness with roundness of contour, which produces that completeness so rarely attained even in the beautiful of the sex. Though educated in New England, her manners had the frankness, freedom, and the warmth of the West. She could hardly fail to be aware of her personal advantages, yet with her they seemed to count for nothing. She was a favorite with women, while few men beheld her with indifference. Her nature was large and rich; and, while she



would readily acknowledge the pleasure she found in the society of men, she had a very general liking for man in the abstract. This kindliness never deluded her fancy with the idea, that, of all the men who approached her, any particular individual was *the* man. In a way, while no one could complain of scorn or coldness, for each, as a representative of his sex, she really felt a sort of liking, while the man himself was regarded with indulgent contempt. Tolerant of him to a certain extent, her estimate of herself, and of what a man must be, was too high. She was too proud to coquette, or indulge in flirtation. Few women of her day and surroundings had so many ardent admirers, from the cultivated of the young cities, to the farm-laborers and wood-choppers. None regarded her with indifference; while, truth to say, she held them all much alike, and found it not at all unpleasant to be surrounded and admired by them. They all had qualities in common, and there was much in them she liked. Whether she dreamed of the future, or ever wondered what might happen, or was in the least anxious, I know not. She was too healthy in mind and spirit for weak fancies, too deep to be lightly won by ordinary wooing, as she was too entirely a woman to be controlled or much swayed by the accidents of wealth or position.

Within the last year, a young Severton of Cleveland, a gentleman of wealth and culture, of some literary pretensions, an amateur musician, of pleasing person and address, had in some sort elected himself an indefinite suitor, had procured himself to be talked about in that relation to her, and only waited for encouragement to make a decided advance. With much of the style and manner supposed to qualify a man for access to the favor of women of refinement, beyond the advantage of being named with her his advance was not rapid, though he



paid her a good deal of that court, which, should a tide bear it onward, leads to fame and fortune; and the graciousness with which Miss Grover received him was only short of that favor for which he so anxiously looked, and which she would hardly extend to any one, whatever she might think of him.

On the day of her meeting Dr. Field, as stated, in the mood in which she then was, his abrupt entrance into the coach upon her seclusion, with the odor which surrounded his name, seemed to her a pure aggression, and she at once placed him in the small minority of men never to be tolerated; and then, just as she had banned, ruled him out, he turned like Remus, contemptuously leaped the wall, and rendered her an act of magnanimous courtesy, and in a way that mortal woman could take no exception to. She had never experienced or witnessed any thing like it, and she doubted whether she had ever before met a man equal to it. He was a man. He said he was, in an indirect way, and acted like one, — one to be dreamed of by a maiden who indulged in that dangerous luxury. She was quite uncomfortable under the impressions produced by this incident, and they marred not a little the pleasure of reaching home.

Edith had a brother, a boy of thirteen, the one misfortune in the Grover house, — so peculiar, and so hopeless of relief, so ever present, that father, mother, and sister would have bartered wealth and position, if, sparing the life of the boy, it might pass from them. With the birth of this son the ardent wish of the father, the devout prayer of the mother, and the dearest wish of the sister, were answered. A soft, pulpy image of his father, strong and well-formed, he entered the outer world. He was named Walter, and would perpetuate the name, improve the fortune, and distinguish the line of Grover. At the



age of three, a finer specimen of the young male of the human species could hardly be found, when, from some cause which the superstitious ascribe to the hand of Providence, he was smitten with an epilepsy which baffled the best medical skill on the continent, and ranked in the catalogue of the incurable. As the boy grew in years, the paroxysms were less frequent, though undiminished in severity. He grew in stature as the young brute grows; and now at thirteen, tall, and well-formed, he exhibited hardly the mind of a child of five. The eyes were dull, the face heavy. Whatever love could inspire, and care and watchfulness perform, what money could purchase, and prayer wring from Heaven, were exhausted, with the certainty, that, if life was prolonged, the last male of his line would reach manhood only to mature to idiocy.

The child was not abandoned to hirelings, nor did love grow weary of care of him. His condition was an abiding sorrow and shadow, to be borne and lived under, but in no way a shame to be covered. The fortunate seldom escape envy; and many of the Grovers' acquaintances saw in this affliction a judgment of God for unknown crimes of covetousness and greed, while the pious looked upon it in the light of a warning visitation, to admonish against putting trust in riches, or to humble the pride of worldly prosperity; as if infinite love and invention would darken, perhaps blot out, a sinless soul for such incidental benefit as such a manifestation of divine goodness might produce to the soul of another, which at the best could but vaguely and darkly guess its purpose. Its shadow added gravity to the manner of the father, and an intensity and fervor to the devotion of the mother. Edith had in a way grown up under it; and, as she approached maturity, her spirits, naturally so vivacious, were sobered by it.



Walter early developed a fondness for horses, but could never be indulged in the use of his favorites, except in carriages. As he grew older, he displayed a great liking for guns and the woods, which, in a guarded way, he was indulged in. Edith naturally took to all out-door exercises, was a fearless rider, had Walter's passion for the woods, and, to make herself a companion as well as guardian for him, she became familiar with the rifle and fowling-piece, and, with a light fusee, was often his comrade in the near forests.



## CHAPTER III.

THIS CHAPTER SETS FORTH WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GROVERS, WITH SEVERAL MATTERS OF INTEREST TO THIS HISTORY.

A DAY or two after Edith's return home, her father came in from Cleveland, languid, spiritless, and ill, and with something peculiar in the expression of his countenance. He soon retired, and on being awakened spoke incoherently; arose feeling badly the next morning, and immediately returned to his bed again, complaining of an awful headache; was soon after discovered by his wife to be in a heavy, stupor-like sleep, from which he was awakened with difficulty. When finally aroused, he spoke wildly, declaring that he had not been asleep. His face was flushed, he had chills, then was hot and feverish, though perspiring. He had never been ill. His wife was terrified, even Edith was alarmed. A messenger was hurried off for Dr. Warren, who came in the evening, and was badly puzzled, as he might well be, — so much so, that he forgot his usual expression of profound wisdom, and manner of confident assurance, familiar to those who knew him. What he did was to open a vein. What ordinary M.D. of that time ever failed to do this in every form of fever? The next step was a potent dose of calomel. To have omitted or delayed it would then have been malpractice. He found his patient so much worse in the morning, that a messenger was despatched for Dr. Palmer. They made a new diagnosis of the case, and



were sadly at fault. The response to the treatment was an aggravation of the worst symptoms. Confusion and dismay ruled their protracted consultation. They dared not pursue the drastic practice so promptly resorted to, and more wisely did nothing for the time.

At this juncture, the firm, cool Edith directed Edwards to take the fastest horse, and go at once for Dr. Winslow at Cleveland, twenty miles away. He was then at the head of his profession. Not widely or deeply read, he was a quick, keen observer, never disregarded a hint or overlooked a suggestion, and had the rare capacity of receiving and entertaining a new idea. Then over fifty, he was master of the diseases peculiar to his field of practice; was liberal, catholic, cool, and wary. A few years before, under an act of the Ohio Legislature, he aided in the organization of a medical school at Cleveland, and become its president, and, his attention called to the newer textbooks, he was not a little astonished at the distance between his own reading and the present state of the learning of his profession. He was a personal friend of the Grovers, and Edith knew that he would fly to their relief. He reached the field of battle and disaster, where a strong man, with the unaided forces of nature, was single-handed combating typhus-fever, aided by two orthodox doctors of the old *régime*. These, in the mean time, had permitted the contest to go on without further interference on their part; and Dr. Winslow found them, with their mouths full of medical technics, awaiting his arrival. The case was as new to him as to them; but he saw at once the fatal tendency of the practice. The symptoms to his eye were unmistakable in the direction they seemed to point; but his reading and observation did not bring the case clearly within his intelligent grasp. The consultation of the three was brief. Within five minutes he



called Edwards, and asked if Dr. Field was not somewhere in the neighborhood; and, on being answered in the affirmative —

“Bring him here at once,” he said. “Don’t send: go and bring him. Tell him Dr. Winslow requests his attendance immediately.”

The sudden demise of the patient could have produced but little more surprise and dismay through the Grover mansion than this order when it became known.

“By whose order was this done, I beg to know?” demanded Dr. Warren.

“By mine,” answered Dr. Winslow very quietly.

“That is most extraordinary, and, permit me to add, most unprofessional, calling in this — without consulting the attending physician.”

“Did you consult Mrs. Grover?” asked Dr. Palmer. “I doubt whether she would consent to Dr. Field being called in.”

“And I cannot meet him, anyway,” added Dr. Warren, scowling savagely.

“You will not be required to. Gentlemen, this is not a time for etiquette. Here is a case so desperate and doubtful, that two experienced doctors have been maundering over it twenty-four hours, doing their wisest and best, which was nothing whatever. The third is called in, and brings little help. The case is new to us. We want light, and here is a young man fresh from the New-York and Philadelphia hospitals. He has visited my patients with me in Cleveland. I don’t care what is said of him in this region. I ordered him to be called, and I take the responsibility.”

The manner in which this was said ended the remonstrance.

When Edith was told that Dr. Winslow had ordered



Dr. Field to be sent for, she received it with a look of fright mingled with surprise, and without a word went to Mrs. Grover.

“Mother, I understand that Mr. Edwards has just gone to call in Dr. Field. It was done by the order of Dr. Winslow.” While this was said with seeming calmness, there was a tone in her voice, showing that it was forced.

“My God!” exclaimed the mother, clasping her hands. “Is the case so hopeless? Can no other help be found? God’s will be done.”

“It does not prove that our case is hopeless, mother. It shows that Dr. Winslow has great confidence in this Dr. Field. It may be, mother dear, that he is our appointed help. God does not always leave the choice to us.”

“Oh, oh, oh! The massy’s sakes alive!” exclaimed Ingles, in the kitchen, to the assembled and amazed help. “Oh, dear! that we could ever be brought to this ’ere! I’d up and die to oncet, an’ done with it — I would! afore he should doctor me, with his ole cow medicine, — the fitin’, drinkin’, good-for-nothin’, nasty man, a-luggin’ his babies and huzzies ’round! What can Mis’ Grover be a thinkin’ on? — or Edith, other?”

“It is Dr. Winslow’s doin’s,” said one of the girls.

“In course ’tis!” rejoined Ingles. “He’s one on ’em hisself, I’ll warrant. He goes ’round proscribin’ for cows, and sich folks. These city doctors is all alike. Poor Dr. Warren! I’d go right straight off, as straight as ever I could go, ef I was he.”

Half an hour later the M.D.’s were at the supper-table, presided over by the collected Edith, while Mrs. Grover and an attendant kept watch over the wandering mind and prostrate form of the unconscious patient. Edith, as so



many similarly situated have been, was shocked at the appetite of the doctors, the vigor with which they assailed the viands before them, and their apparent indifference to the condition of their patient, whose case she felt they had found beyond their skill. There they sat talking, and eating with relish, as if to-morrow and the succeeding days must come and go in deepening gold and splendor of the autumn, and disease and death were banished the world.

The conversation finally attracted her attention. Under the hand of Dr. Winslow it came back to the only subject of interest to her. Perhaps he may have given it that turn for her benefit; and he may also have remembered his hasty words to the two doctors, and was willing to put the matter in a form less offensive. To Edith they seemed to resume a conversation, or continue one, not heard by her.

“My dear doctor,” said Winslow to Warren, “the young man was probably rude to you, considering your age and high standing; but then we must remember that he was defending a patient’s limb against amputation. The case under ordinary lights, undoubtedly warranted, required, the operation. He thought otherwise. He resisted you; and the result, mind you, proved that for once you were wrong. He saved the limb. His new method of extension and treatment saved the limb. They and he just met the case. He brought the lad to us at Cleveland two weeks ago, and our class had the benefit of his exposition of the case. It was really beautiful. The limb is but a trifle shorter than the other.”

“And what did he say of Dr. Warren and his consultation?” asked Dr. Palmer dryly.

“Not a word to Dr. Warren’s discredit, but quite the reverse.” And so went one of the grave charges against the young physician.



Edith knew that this was the case of the Wilkins boy, in which Dr. Field had been accused of brutal misconduct.

“The fact is,” said the generous Dr. Winslow, “these young men come among us now with the advantage of all the knowledge and light of these last twenty years, and it is immense. During all this time we have been off here in the woods, in a sort of twilight; and in many things the youngsters can teach us, and whether we remain on earth much longer depends on our capacity to take new ideas. Undoubtedly the forms of disease change. New types arise; and certainly new and improved methods, and new medical agents, for old diseases have been discovered. Why, when this youth was last at Cleveland, I took him about with me one morning; and I am not blind, nor very dull, as you know; but I was astonished at the delicacy of his touch, and the subtlety of his senses and perception, to use such an expression. Why, it was only the other day that Baldwin, who is, as you know, our greatest stock-raiser and dealer, told me that he was using a prescription, which, as he understood, was made by Dr. Field, for the bloody murrain, with great success. It was infallible, given in the early stages. We joked Field about it, and he laughingly said there was some foundation for his being called a cow-doctor.”

The front door-bell rang; and, with a hasty apology, Edith hastened, and answered it herself. She had resolved upon her course. Their only hope seemed to rest on this young man; and she somehow felt that hers was quite strong, and he should have no cause to remember her former manner toward him, and none to complain of it, in the new relation which they must sustain to each other. As she approached the open door, he stood on the broad step in front of it, with the last rays of the yellow autumn sun fairly deluging him. As she advanced, he lifted his hat, and bowed with graceful *hauteur*.



“Is this Dr. Field?” she asked with a frank naturalness, and she really was in doubt whether it was he.

“My name is Field,” he answered, quite disarmed; “and I am sometimes called doctor.”

“I am Edith Grover,” she responded, with a gracious inclination of her person, which he acknowledged with another bow. “Dr. Winslow wishes to see you, — has been speaking in the handsomest terms of you. Oh! I — we hope you can help us.” Her earnest words went to the young man’s heart and conscience. Could this be the cold, proud impersonation of womanly scorn so lately on exhibition before him? As he stood in a moment’s maze, “Shall I conduct you to him?” she asked.

“Certainly,” resuming something of the air with which he first bowed to her.

Her reference to Dr. Winslow’s encomium certainly merited an acknowledgment to her personally. Possibly he thought that she only expressed the relief which Dr. Winslow’s kind mention of him gave her. He evidently heard it with indifference. That gentleman met him in the corridor, had a word with him, and Edith conducted him to her father. All that could be learned from attendants Edwards had communicated to him: for the rest he was properly remitted to his own skill. His examination was rapid, and to himself seemingly satisfactory. In passing from the room he met Edith, who introduced him to her mother, who stood there with her. His manner to Mrs. Grover was deferential and charming, and he paused a moment to answer their anxious inquiries.

“There is no immediate danger, and very large ground for hope,” he said with warmth and sincerity, addressing the elder lady.

“Oh, how gladly this sounds to us!” she exclaimed.

“I may venture to suggest further,” he said, “that



just the fewest persons possible should be about him," looking toward quite a group of attendants in the sick-room. "They only rob him of breath. Open all the windows. He needs the best possible air, and a plenty of it." His words, low and gently spoken, were nevertheless with authority.

Dr. Warren consented to remain, and young Field was shown to the room where the seniors awaited his approach. In reply to a question from Dr. Winslow, the young man, in the fewest words, expressed his opinion with becoming modesty, for which he gave, in the clearest way, his reasons, showing that his examination had been thorough and satisfactory. No doubt whatever could exist but that the case was one of qualified typhus. He remarked that it had been supposed that no case of typhus had yet arisen in Northern Ohio; that in his limited practice he had met but one similar case, to which he was called the day before, which he described with clearness. On the question of treatment wide differences of opinion were developed. Dr. Winslow was with Dr. Field. At the end of the conference, Dr. Winslow asked the young man if he would take charge of the patient. After a moment's hesitation, he consented, if that was the wish of the patient's friends. Dr. Winslow said he was authorized to speak for them. That it was their wish, in which he entirely concurred.

The manner of the young man was cordial and frank to the other two medical gentlemen; and, as they were leaving, he invited them, as opportunity presented, to call, and mark the course of the case.

He entered upon the duties of his new charge, and made many important changes in the treatment at once, which not only indicated his mastery of the situation, but inspired confidence in the friends and attendants. Here



was a man who acted as if he knew what he was about, who believed in doing something, who was in downright earnest. On his approach, the situation and surroundings of the house, the position of the trees about it, light, sun, air, were all noted. The room in which he found Mr. Grover was unfavorable, in his judgment; and he selected another which met his wishes, had it prepared, and transferred his charge to it.

The news of Mr. Grover's illness, its mystery and danger, were quickly spread through all the region about his residence; and for the last two days a large number of anxious and alarmed friends were in constant attendance at the homestead, most of whom were personal strangers to Dr. Field, and shared in the adverse opinion so strong and general against him. To these the course of the old doctors was simply amazing, and, in contrast with the prompt vigor of the quiet and unhesitating youth now in command, contributed largely to the almost instantaneous change in the popular estimate of him. A few adherents of the retiring doctors said that they all the time understood the case, and knew what they were about; that they had to wait a certain time, and that somebody was wanted who had the leisure to remain and take the immediate charge, and that Dr. Field was merely executing their orders; all of which was very summarily rejected by the new admirers of the young chief.

When his arrangements were completed, he quietly took possession of a room adjoining his hospital ward, and informed Mrs. Grover that he would remain in the exclusive charge of the patient for the night, would require little assistance; that he wanted some one at hand intelligent and reliable, whom he could instruct in the duties of the place, and who could be left in charge in his absence, saying, —



“It may be necessary to give you much of my presence, Mrs. Grover; but I will try to make it as little unpleasant to you as possible.”

“I am to fill the place of chief nurse, Dr. Field,” said Edith, stepping forward with quiet decision. “I shall be faithful; and, if you will be patient with me, I can soon learn my duties.”

“It is your undoubted right, Miss Grover,” answered the young man; “and I am sure none more intelligent, with firmness and coolness, can be found.” There was no shadow of intended compliment in his words. “But,” and he hesitated, “there are some reasons why one at your age should not be exposed to the possible danger of continuous and prolonged attendance upon a typhus-fever patient, which to one of middle age would be less, as is thought. This disease is medically supposed to be contagious, and those under thirty years of age are thought to be more likely to take it.”

“Oh! is that all?” said Edith eagerly. “I am elected then, and enter upon my duties at once.” Did she think the young man remembered the ride in the stage-coach? I don’t know.

Directing that some of the gentlemen who had proffered their services might be lodged within call, he quite decidedly dismissed the ladies. Edith lingered a moment to say that she must ask to be permitted to look into the sick-room occasionally during the night, and reluctantly went out with her mother.

One there was in the house, in the vicinity of the kitchen, who remained implacable.

“I will jest give this ’ere Dr. Fields a piece o’ my mind. No one is safe where ’e was. Whoever ’efore hearn o’ movin’ a sick man, an’ him a livin’!” And she wandered off toward the hospital quarters, but whether to



discharge this important duty, survey the fortress, or get sight of the object of her dislike, whom she had never seen, may not be known. The house was quiet. She stole furtively along the dim corridor, and peeped into the patient's room, as also into the room adjoining it. If she was looking for the doctor for whom in her mind she had sketched a properly repulsive image, she did not see him. Instead of him there was only a really very good and quite youthful-looking man, with a pale, attractive face, very fine, large eyes, to whom she took at once, and was very willing to confide in. She looked at him a long time, and so much interested, that she finally approached him.

"Laws sakes! whoever sawn such doin's afore! Do you prove of it?" she said to him.

"Well, not all of it, I must say," said the amused youth.

"This 'ere movin' a sick man from one room to another, and carryin' on 'im foot foremost! I s'pose it was this 'ere Dr. Field's doin's."

"I presume it was," he replied.

"Wal, if he hadn't gone, I'd jest give 'im a piece o' my mind, that I would!"

"You may give it to me for him," said the young man. "I will see that he has it. It will do him good. He needs mind very much, I know," very gravely.

"Yis, he needs it, if ever a man did, — to go 'round docterin' cows, an' runnin' off gals an' babies. W'y, a body ain't safe where 'e is."

"My good woman," said the young man, laughing in spite of himself, "I don't really believe you are in great personal danger; but, if he approaches you, do you come straight to me. I shall always be here when he is."

"Oh, I'm so glad! I s'pose this is Mr. Severton. You come from Cleveland with Dr. Winslow, didn't you?"



advancing quite near him, and looking him confidentially in the face.

“Well, not quite all that,” was the puzzled and puzzling answer. “Who is this Mr. Severton, anyway?”

“Oh-h-h! I thought you’s he. Oh! he’s Edith Cleveland’s beau, you see. I s’pose suthin’ll happen sometime.”

“Oh, I see! I presume something will happen. Things do, sometimes.”

“Will Dr. Fields be ’ere in the mornin’?”

“I presume he will.”

“Wal, good-evenin’.”

“Good-by. Call again,” good-humoredly.

“Sartin,” and lingeringly she turned away.

At the door she met the flushed face of Edith, who had been near enough to overhear the conversation, and was too embarrassed to interrupt it, and whom the person of Ingles protected from Field’s eyes.

“O Ingles! That is Dr. Field!” in a low, distressed voice.

“Dr. Fields! Lord a massy on me!” cried the abashed spinster, as she fled in dismay down the corridor.

The mortified Edith took refuge with her mother, from whom she concealed her chagrin, and resolved to admonish Ingles of the danger of the region of the sick-room, and a moment later she reproached herself for the thought that even typhus-fever would refuse Ingles. At about twelve o’clock she again stole to her father’s room, and just entered it. She thought his breathing much easier, and she heard none of the delirious murmuring that had so terrified and distressed her. Dr. Field sat near him, with his face in profile, the fine outline of which she observed, intently contemplating the face of the sick man. Apparently he was counting the pulsations at the wrist;



and as he desisted his eyes turned upon her, and she felt that he did not see her, was unconscious of her presence, and she stole away with the weird sensation of one who had met the eyes of a sleep-walker.

At three she again visited her father. Dr. Field was then slowly walking up and down his own room. As he passed the door communicating with that of his patient, he saw her, and came to her side where she stood by the bed. The murmur of the unconscious lips had ceased, and the breathing was quite natural. The doctor, in her presence, moistened the sick man's mouth, and explained to her the use of the appliances employed about his person, conducted her to the door, and gravely told her she must retire, and sleep if possible. It was curious, the influence of his cool, deep, not unmusical voice upon her. There was in it the force of the same assertion as when he took possession of her trunk. It seemed to disengage her clinging anxiety from its object, and soothe the nervous restlessness of her spirit. When she gained her room, as several times before during the day and night, she knelt, and prayed with fervor, loosened her clothes, and composed herself by her mother, and slept as the overtaxed innocent may.

The lamps burnt the long lone night through. The presence of the young physician, with the confidence and feeling of relief which it inspired, brought relaxation and a sense of safety to the whole household.



## CHAPTER IV.

TELLS HOW YOUNG FIELD CAME TO SAY THAT HE WAS ONCE  
AMBITIOUS TO BE A CIRCUS-RIDER, AND OTHER MATTERS  
OF INTEREST.

As Edith awoke the next morning from her dreamless slumbers, the peril of her father fell back upon her consciousness like a ponderous weight; and she wondered that the sky should be so bright, the earth so green, the autumn foliage so gorgeous. A flock of gay jay-birds, in their brilliant plumage, were fluttering about among the trees on the lawn; and a pair of red squirrels, in their noisy frolic, were chasing each other up and down the tree-trunks in the wantonness of play.

It was late; and she found Dr. Winslow, who had breakfasted, preparing to leave for Cleveland. Her mother was with her father; and, as the two bent over him, in the mitigation of the symptoms they could now very clearly see the ravage already made by the most fearful disease that smites the children of men. Their hearts sank within them. The two physicians approached, the elder to take leave; and the ladies, by the expression of their faces, saw that they were not in the least despondent. Edith felt the weight lifted from her heart, and greeted them cheerfully, almost joyously. "May we indeed hope, doctor?" She gave her hand to the elder; but her look and words were to the younger, as if she wished his assurance.

"Certainly you may," was the answer of Dr. Wins-



low, taking a hand of each of the ladies. "We have this morning carefully gone over the case. We have the wished-for result of our treatment. You must be patient and hopeful. Many days must elapse before decided signs of recovery. I leave you in the best possible hands, and will come again at your call, which I do not expect will be necessary." And then he went away.

Field perfected his arrangements for the care of his patient, and met Mrs. Grover and Edith at the breakfast-table. They availed themselves of the occasion to learn more definitely his opinions as to the condition and prospects of his charge. A close observer of the young man's face might have several times detected a half-smile that rather hovered about his mouth and eyes than lit upon them, as if touched by the memory of something ludicrous or amusing. Upon stepping into the corridor that morning, after day had asserted itself there, he encountered Ingles, who approached him with much trepidation, and making a very humble, old-fashioned school-girl courtesy, addressed him.

"Good-mornin', Dr. Fields. I come to beg yer parding. I meant no offence last night, Dr. Fields: I sartin didn't, shure as I live."

"Good-morning, Miss Ingles. I know you did not; and I did not take the least in the world, I assure you."

"Oh, I'm so glad! I thought I'd best come and settle the hash to once, an' I'm raly glad to find ye ain't mad nor nuthin'. How is Mr. Grover this mornin', doctor?"

"He is doing very well, I assure you."

The old spinster lingered, notwithstanding his crimes against her sex, which do not repel all women from the sinner. Something about the person, in the manner, of the young man, attracted her, and she wanted a final understanding with him.



“The facts is, I s’pose, doctor,” she ventured to say, “that doctors is more like other men than anybody else is; on account of their perfession, you know, in bein’ ’round more.”

“And have the right to carry babies around, and that sort of thing, eh?” laughing very pleasantly.

“Yes, jes so. I didn’t mean ter blame ye fer it. It was all her fault, ye know. A man ain’t expected, ye know” — As she hesitated, he came to her aid.

“Of course he ain’t. You are very considerate of the faults of men and doctors, and I am much obliged to you,” bowing gravely. “And then, you know,” he went on, “that, if boys stone toads, the cows give bloody milk.”

“Yis, I’ve hearn o’ that,” she replied, never having seen an instance.

“In which case,” he logically concluded, “it would be better practice to whip the boys than to go round doctoring the cows” —

“That’s jist it, Dr. Fields, though I never said ye doctored cows.”

“— for giving bad milk,” he added a little archly.

“No; an’ I’m glad you ain’t mad at me.”

“Not in the least, and I am glad we agree so well.”

“Massay, so’m I! Good-mornin’, Dr. Fields;” and she went away immensely pleased with the young man, and quite appreciating the charity of her sex for the weaknesses of men in the person of a handsome young doctor. In her heart she knew it was all the fault of the good-for-nothing thing, and she was glad she had told him so.

The young man entered the neat and airy breakfast-room, even in that period of distress decorated tastefully with late summer flowers, with a cheerful face, over which would steal little gleams of the memory of his early inter-



view with Ingles. Mrs. Grover beckoned him to the side-board, and pointing to a little group of cut glass : —

“Dr. Field, here are some choice liquors and wines, and I have no doubt you will find them helpful in your great fatigue and exposure.”

“Mrs. Grover, I am greatly obliged. I never take a drop of liquor, and I don’t know the taste of wine. I look upon them all as medicines of no great value.”

In her surprise at his declaration, Edith almost stared him in the face for a moment, and saw in his clear, deep eyes the absolute truth of his words ; and later, as he sat near her, addressing himself to her mother, who sat opposite him, with his face in profile to Edith, she noticed the healthful transparency and fine fibre of the cuticle of his rather pale face, and also the earnest sincerity of his look and voice. The breakfast was little more than nominal to them all. The young man neatly divided a fowl, and gave each the indicated part with the grace of one accustomed to the society of ladies and the duties of his place, apparent even to his pre-occupied hostesses.

“Doctor,” said Mrs. Grover, “I noticed that you expressed no opinion this morning when Dr. Winslow was present. You will not alarm us : we want very much to know what you think of our chances.”

“A little more in detail,” added Edith

“It is certainly your due when you ask it,” he answered ; “and perhaps” — hesitating — “I may be excused for saying that last year, for several months, I was in attendance and had the charge of a ward in an eastern hospital devoted to patients suffering from typhus-fever, under the supervision of an eminent physician who had made it a study.

Then, in a few sentences of the simplest words, he brought the case within their easy apprehension, and in-



dictated the course of treatment, and the reason for it, saying, —

“ We feel that we have a clear grasp of the case in all its bearings. We cannot dislodge and expel the malady. We must mainly rely on the strength, ability, and endurance of the patient to hold out, and fight the battle. We have secured such a response to our treatment of last night, that I am sure we have made ourselves the useful allies of Nature in this contest. I have no doubt we can help her materially. We are to sustain and re-enforce her energies. We will be vigilant, watchful, and hopeful, and Heaven will permit us to succeed.” He spoke with confidence, and the enthusiasm of quite a young man, and a devotee of his art. There was the glow of high courage and resolve, which looked like inspiration, on his face, and the last words had the tone of submissive reverence. The two women were exalted by his words and manner; and, save by fervid “ We trust it will,” neither spoke. As they arose from the table he said, “ I may have needlessly alarmed you about the danger of attendance on our charge. I do not regard it as great. I only enjoin prudence. I have found frequent baths, change of dress, plenty of air, and care of one’s self, quite ample protection; and I have fully advised those who will, with you, be much exposed; and,” turning smilingly to Edith, “ I shall claim the privilege of observing Miss Grover, as well as her mother, and know I shall not be misapprehended.”

“ Thank you, thank you, doctor,” said the elder lady: “ we shall trust you.” A profound bow, and look of satisfaction, was the response to her words.

He had many patients to visit that day, scattered over a wide extent of country. His own horse was four miles away. Edwards thought he could supply him for the day; and, when asked what kind of a horse would suit his pur-



pose, replied that he could ride any thing, but wanted one that could perform a full day of hard travel in half of that time. "Give me something with power and bottom."

"I'll give him Wicked Dick," said Bill, the stable and horseman of the establishment. "He'll carry him to the devil in less than half a day."

"That's what I'm afraid of," said Edwards. "Let him have Prince."

"He wants shooin'."

"Well, Miss Edith won't object to his riding Jilt one day."

"She's out in the paster. Oh! let 'im try Dick. He's so shure he can ride any thin'. Dick won't hurt 'im."

There really seemed no choice; and Edwards turned away, rather than assented. Five minutes later, a tall, powerful, rough-made, light gray was brought out rampant. The fact was, he never had been thoroughly mastered, and not backed for months. Those who knew him were too prudent, and he had a wide as well as an unenviable reputation.

The young doctor stood ready to mount; and his eye flashed at the splendid approach of Wicked Dick, as he took him in with the skill of a connoisseur.

"It is the best and only thing we can do," said Edwards apologetically. "He was never well broken, and named Wicked Dick for his vices. I don't know as I ought to permit you to try him."

"I rather like his looks, and don't mind a bad name," was the answer of the young man, approaching the horse, which shied a little as he went toward him.

"You see, he's been a-standin' in the stable, doin' nothin', for mor'n a week, an' feels 'is oats," said Bill encouragingly. "Try 'im, doctor," continued the young man, who was the last one dismounted by the vicious brute.



“That is just what I shall do,” replied Field quietly.

“I fear he’ll be the death of you,” said Edwards, very much inclined to interfere at the last moment.

“Death on a pale hoss,” cried Bill, unconscious of what he had said.

“An M.D. on a light gray: my patients will appreciate that,” said the doctor, smiling, and preparing to mount.

Dick permitted him to approach, and even accepted a caress or two, seemed rather to fancy him, but still showed the white in his eyes, as if to say, “Don’t seat yourself and your affections on me.” The doctor liked the outfit, tried the girths, let down the stirrups, and adjusted the reins, then stepped lightly and quickly to his seat in the saddle, with the grace of a practised horseman as he was. The appearance of the well-known horse attracted the whole household—laborers, visitors, girls, and all—to witness the equestrian experiment in which interest and curiosity were mingled with fear. Mrs. Grover, from her window, saw the horse led out; and, when Field approached him, she divined the meaning of his unwonted appearance. “O Edith! For Heaven’s sake, go and prevent the doctor from mounting that awful horse! He will be killed!” she cried in distress.

“No, he won’t, mother,” said Edith, kindling at the prospect of the inevitable contest. “He knows what he can do,” yet, in spite of herself, drawn to the veranda for a better view. She gained it in time to mark the ease and grace of the mount, and, like the rest, was struck by his pose on the tall, lithe horse. One moment, and Dick, in his exuberance of pent spirit, made a succession of splendid vaults, which he finished by throwing his hindfeet into the air. The young man remained firm in his seat. An instant’s ominous quiet. The rider bent forward



to pat Dick with his hand, when the brute suddenly reared to his highest capacity, and threw himself back. His rider was too quick for him. Withdrawing from the stirrups, he lighted on his feet, seized the furious horse by the head as he struck the ground, bore and held it firmly down. The animal turned on his side, now utterly helpless, — powerless alike to rise, or for mischief. After one or two unavailing struggles, he became quiescent. Bill, Edwards, and half a dozen men, now ran up as if to aid the victor.

“Keep the ground clear, boys,” he cried good-naturedly to them. “He is about done for.” After a moment he patted him with his hand, and soothed him with his voice. Two or three minutes elapsed perhaps, when the doctor gathered up the reins, released Dick’s head, and as he arose his rider was again firmly in the saddle, and gave him the word to go, at which, with long springing leaps, he went up the lane toward his stable, was wheeled in a graceful demicircle, and came spiritedly back. His rider halted him for a moment, received his hat, which had been pitched from his head, and turned his horse toward the highway, and at a smart gallop rode the now subdued animal away. As he passed the front of the house he went within two yards of Edith, who stood supporting her mother. What a splendid spectacle was Edith, with her noble form drawn up, her clear, olive face a little blanched, with admiration mingling with apprehension and high spirit, and her splendid dark eyes a little distended and flashing! He lifted his hat with a proud inclination of person to them as he dashed by; and from the loud applause, almost cheers, which followed him, he rode away.

For a moment, mother and daughter quite forgot the husband and father, to whom they instantly returned.

Very gallantly the youth rode away, leaving himself to



be admired and wondered over ; but he carried away an unpleasant impression. Though not suspicious, he was half possessed with the idea, that, notwithstanding the words of Edwards, a very dangerous practical joke had perhaps been intended. There certainly were a good many spectators, as if the thing had been generally understood. They all seemed to know the character of the horse, and could have known nothing of his ability to deal with him. An ordinary rider might have been killed. This, however, did not annoy him so much. The unpleasant thing referred to Edith. In the exhilaration, almost exultation, of his mastery of the savage horse, he lifted his hat and saluted her, with the glow of his triumph in his face and manner. He did not even see her mother. To him it seemed that an instantaneous change came over her. Her face at once had the cold, distant scorn of the stage-coach, and as he went off the impulse to turn and look back at her was very strong. She certainly did not acknowledge his bow, save by the freezing look he received. He was humiliated. He had, as a gentleman might, presumed upon her notice, and was snubbed. After all, he was only a man, and quite a young one ; and he went off over the hills under the autumn sky, in the sunshine, in a bitter mood. Everywhere he went he found that his horse was known, and by name. Everybody was amazed that he rode — could ride him, and he heard several stories of his exploits. He did not spare him in the least, though he cultivated him. Having a hard day's ride, he wisely humored him to the road, and nobly did Dick respond to the calls made upon him. His gaits were all fast, and his walk quite a marvel. Before Dr. Field left in the morning, he assured Mrs. Grover that he would return at two for dinner. He was met with a new call at the Corners ; and a little after four, in a very leisurely way, he rode up



the elm and maple avenue to the Grover mansion, and delivered Dick, no longer wicked, into the hands of the wondering, worshipping Bill at the stable.

I am afraid he did not return in a frame of mind to greatly appreciate the anxiety felt on his account, intensified as it had been by his protracted absence, nor was he in the least conscious of the relief which his return brought to the whole household. Spite of his honest effort to wear his usually cheerful countenance, quick eyes detected that it was somewhat assumed. He went at once to his patient, by whom he sat some minutes engaged in a careful observation of him, and a scrutiny of every symptom and indication. The bedside was sacred to the tried youth. In its presence, and the exercise of the, to him, holy office of ministration, the perturbation of his feelings subsided. He felt that an outside, an unworthy train of thought and feeling had obtruded upon and darkened his spirit, and possibly obscured his perceptions, and a moisture dimmed his eyes for a moment as he gratefully felt them now die out of him. When he arose from his examination of his patient, and this introspection, the same watchful eyes were gladdened with the almost sweet serenity of his face, and detected a slight smile about his mobile mouth not noticed before. They saw also the vanishing traces of conflict. He raised his own eyes, and frankly met those of Edith, and turned to those of her mother.

“He has gone on very well, very well, indeed,” he said, with a hearty and cordial assurance, “and as I hoped he would.”

He passed into the room set apart for nurses and attendants, when Mrs. Grover cried out, —

“O doctor! how awfully we were frightened this morning! and I have not fully recovered yet.”

“I am very sorry: I was quite in fault. Edwards



warned me. It was very boyish in me, I am sure. It was a sort of a challenge, which on the moment I could not resist," deprecatingly.

"It might have resulted in great misfortune to us," said Edith coldly.

"The *doctor*," emphasizing the word, "must be very much obliged to you, Miss Grover," said the young man sarcastically.

"Indeed! I did not think of the *doctor* at the time. I forgot every thing but the courage and skill that mastered that brute. I am glad it happened, and that I saw it!" cried the brave Edith, with generous warmth. Had the young man been less schooled, this frank speech had been dangerous. Doubtless what had before passed between these two had much to do in rendering him impervious. He acknowledged the compliment with a slight bow, and merely said,—

"I was once ambitious to be a circus-rider."

"Had you further trouble with him?" meaning the horse.

"Not the least. In good hands he would be one of the most valuable horses I have ever seen. I should never have trouble with him again."

"Will you accept him from us?" asked Mrs. Grover.

"Not as a present. I thank you, Mrs. Grover. I cannot afford two horses. Indeed, I am indebted for the one I now call mine," smiling, as he exposed his poverty, with the frankest indifference.

It was now ascertained that he had gone without dinner; and he was carried off to the dining-room at once, and then, after the necessary directions, and saying that he was certainly to be called at twelve, and before if his presence was wished, he retired to a room set apart for his use.



At a little past twelve, Edith, sitting by her father near an open window, fell into a thin slumber, and dreamed that she was cold, and that some one, whom she did not see, came and wrapped her warmly; and she awoke just as Dr. Field stepped back from laying a warm wrap over her lightly-covered shoulders.

“Pardon me, Miss Grover. You seemed exposed. I hardly dared awaken you. I really must insist you shall not expose yourself to a draught of this night air.”

The thoughtful act, and manner of doing it, were in pleasant contrast with his coldness of the afternoon, and she thanked him warmly.

“And now, Miss Grover,” looking at his watch, “it is past twelve: you are to retire, and I am to remain in charge.” And, stepping into the waiting-room, he peremptorily dismissed for the night the two dozing attendants who occupied it.

The next day he rode Dick, and the next, and for many succeeding days, and the two became attached. Under his unceasing watch and care, Mr. Grover’s case went on without seeming change, and his wife and daughter became accustomed to it, and, with its steady wear and pressure, bore up bravely and well, counting the days. Of course, from the hour of his entrance into the house, next to the sick man, the young physician was the object and centre of interest to the whole household. For the first day or two he had apparently opened himself out to the ladies without reserve. For the two or three days afterward his manner underwent a change in this respect, and he presented an instance of arrested development. Something of mystery, of withholding himself as it seemed to them, — not so much an air of reserve, but something like a veil, a mist, — enveloped him, which he did not put aside, and which they respected. He was



purely the physician, and nothing more. In this capacity nothing could surpass his care and attention, and in this character they soon came to rest upon him their entire confidence. He evinced no interest in them or their surroundings, save as connected with his patient.

In marked contrast with the rough, brusque manner of the Western medical men of that day, his air and ways were those of the thorough gentleman in the drawing-room, the spontaneous manifestation of the refinement of soul and intellect which seemed to rule him. He occasionally noticed a book, a picture, or a stray piece of music, in a way which indicated his familiarity with them. Of himself he spoke never a word; nothing of his antecedents, surroundings, or prospects, — who he was, where he came from, nor when, nor why of all places he was at the Corners. He could hardly be unaware of the stories afloat to his disadvantage. Did he care? Was he indifferent? Was he proud? Did he take deep affront at the manner of Edith toward him in the stage? Did he dislike the Grovers? He not only declined the opportunities which his office, his almost residence in the house, gave him to cultivate them, but he avoided them. To Mrs. Grover he was less reserved. Toward Edith his manner from the first was coldly courteous. At the end of a week she felt less acquainted with him than on the morning when he won her unreserved admiration for his daring and skill in horsemanship. To her father his manner had the tenderness of a woman, — of a wife. To her mother it was all that was respectful and considerate. To herself deferential, cold, and distant. Did she care? Was she piqued by it? True woman that she was, she wished it had been otherwise. The memory of the stage scene, never pleasant, was constantly with her now, and was a sore memory. More than once she resolved to speak to him of it, and



was on the alert to detect some allusion to it by him. He never made the slightest, nor could she invent a way of approach to it practicable. In his absence nothing seemed easier than to go to him, and say, "Doctor, do you remember our ride in the stage from the Corners? What must you have thought of me?" In his presence she could not do it. It grew worse and more impossible; and, in waiting for an opportunity which never came, it was put by.

The splendid autumn deepened. The woods were aflame with color. The sky was darkened by the flight of countless millions of pigeons, and the atmosphere thickening with the haze and creamy smoke of approaching Indian summer.



## CHAPTER V.

REV. MR. HUMPHREY TELLS MRS. GROVER AND EDITH A  
LITTLE STORY, AND ALL THAT HE KNOWS ABOUT IT.

REV. MR. HUMPHREY was one of the first to bear the covenant of faith into the Ohio wilderness. Though a graduate of Yale, he could hardly, in one sense, be said to be liberally educated. Orthodox and narrow in faith, but all-embracing in charities and practice, he would give his last crust to the sinner whom he knew would be lost, and travel ten miles through forest and swamps to relieve a man whom he believed was elected to perdition. Broad and wide in good works, narrow in dogma, genial in his intercourse with the world, he had collected a little church by the wayside, and withstood sturdily as he might the influences of Satan in the by-ways and forest-paths of the heathen on the Reserve. He was well known to the Grovers, who honored and esteemed him as a faithful Christian minister, to whom, for his work and missions, they made liberal contributions, and once or twice each year made it a point, at much labor and inconvenience, to attend his church, quite remote from them.

He heard of Mr. Grover's illness, and hastened to visit him. He could only gaze upon his unknowing form, who, unconscious of his friend's presence, could neither be solaced by his sympathy, nor profit by his ghostly ministration, and after an earnest invocation at his bedside he was conducted to another part of the house to comfort as he might the stricken wife and sorely-tried daughter.



Vigorous and sturdy, abounding in undoubting faith, his presence was a tonic to Mrs. Grover, and not without an invigorating effect on the self-poised Edith.

“And so, as I am told, my young friend Dr. Field is your physician?” said the minister, seating himself in the drawing-room. “I am rejoiced to hear it! Dr. Warren is an excellent man, and so is Dr. Palmer, — both excellent men in their old-fashioned way; but they are nothing to this young Field.”

“Oh! you know him, then? I am delighted to hear it! And he is a friend of yours!” exclaimed Mrs. Grover. “Do you know him well?”

“Very well, very well, indeed. I can tell you all about him, all about him. That is, I mean I know something about him,” just then remembering how little he knew of him, though he felt in his soul that he knew the youth thoroughly.

“Who is he, Mr. Humphrey? Where did he come from? He is a mystery to us,” said Mrs. Grover.

“Eh, how? Well, in fact, Mrs. Grover, so he is to me, come to think about it. The young man himself is as clear as daylight; but about him, his history — really, about all I can say is that he is Dr. Field, and I would risk all I hope for that he is all right, true, and honest. Only one thing he lacketh, I fear,” pausing. “He came — he comes from the Corners now.”

“Yes; but how came he to be at the Corners? and why does he stay there?” asked the lady.

“Well, I did ask him that, and he said it was accidental. He was on his way from somewhere to some place, and stopped there to feed his horse. I don’t know as he had a horse, though; but he had his saddle-bags or surgical instruments, and stopped there, anyway, for something; and Wilkins was there, and told him about his boy’s



leg, and that Dr. Warren had decided to cut it off, and the boy begged that it should not be done; and Field got interested in it, and went home with Wilkins to see it. There he met friend Warren, and they disagreed about the case. Dr. Field said it could be saved; and Wilkins and the boy wanted he should undertake it; and he said, with Dr. Warren's consent, he would stop and try it. The old doctor refused, and warm words followed. There are two stories about it. Warren and his friends say that Field assaulted him, and drove him away. When I told Field of this, he laughed, and said that Wilkins and his wife wanted he should treat the case; and Dr. Warren went off in a miff; and Field took charge of the boy, and had to remain in the neighborhood, and so he put up at the Corners; and when he got the boy so he could take him to Cleveland, a month ago, he had been called to a good many cases about the Corners which he could not leave, and hadn't money enough to pay his board-bill, and had to stay. The care of the boy was a great thing. You know what the Corners are. A good many people wanted to get rid of him, and have told all manner of stories about him, till he has about made up his mind to stay for good, and I hope he will. I never asked him about himself. If I had, I am sure he would have told me."

"Mr. Humphrey, we are glad to hear this, which only confirms what Dr. Winslow said of him," answered Mrs. Grover.

"Yes, Winslow knows him, and sent him here, as I understand," said the minister. "Was that so?"

"Certainly. We had heard nothing but ill of him, and should never have thought of calling him."

"But, doctor, you have not told us how you made his acquaintance?" said the attentive Edith.

"Well, Miss Grover, I have been trying to think how



I can tell you the story. It has a real romance — almost a tragedy — in it. But it is hardly a tale for a minister to tell (though I had a hand in it), and perhaps not one for a young lady's ears at all; and yet I want you to know it," looking anxiously to Mrs. Grover.

"I am sure you may tell it," said Mrs. Grover decidedly, looking at Edith.

"There is a foolish, weak girl — a mere child — in it, and an equally foolish boy, and a very much younger person finally appeared — if I thought I might" — now looking to Edith.

"I am sure you may," said the young lady, with frank innocence, without change of color. "And I confess I want very much to hear it too."

"Well, over the river, and three or four miles from me, live the Dykes," began the assured minister. "The old man Dyke is a rough, hard, tyrannical man, well-to-do, and the oldest boy promises to be like him. Mrs. Dyke is an inoffensive, kind-hearted woman in her way. John Dyke, the second boy, is more like his mother, — a very good-meaning boy of about twenty or twenty-one. Well, they had Nancy Bank, an innocent, pink-faced little thing, unknowing, and only sixteen or seventeen years old, whose father is a shiftless man, who lives a mile or so from Dyke's. Well, John and Nancy became intimate, too much so; and the old folks found it out, of course, after a while, and something had to be done. John, jun., wanted to marry Nancy, like an honest-hearted lad. The old man would not hear of it, and matters went on till further delay was impossible. Old man Dyke had heard of Dr. Field, as the stories go of him, and thought he was the man. He went for him, and Field went over. It seems Dyke offered him quite a sum to — to — well, to take care of things, so that nothing



might be known of the wicked folly of the young people."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Grover, "was Nancy to be" —

"Oh, no! her child. Well, when the healthy old sinner had committed himself, Field required that he put his proposition in writing, which he did. Armed with this, Field turned upon him, and threatened to have him indicted, and sent to the Penitentiary for conspiracy, or an attempt, or criminal intent, or something. The old man called in the oldest boy, Joe; but Field was too many for them, and the old villain had to give in. John was all right. He wanted to be married, and his mother wanted he should be, and the doctor had them all called in, and it was agreed on; and John went off post-haste to Cleveland for a license, and the youngest one came over for me, while the doctor tried to keep them under. When I got there, old Dyke was for backing out; and I was present at the interview between him, Joe, and the doctor. I shall never forget it. If Dr. Field was only in the ministry with his heart and soul, he would be the most powerful preacher of his day. He went over the whole case; and, when Dyke undertook to deny it, he produced the writing with the old scoundrel's signature. Never did I hear a man talked to as was that black-hearted old sinner. He fairly shook, and then cowed, melted down, and surrendered.

Of course Nancy knew what was going on, and her mother was there. The license had been procured, and things had gone too far; and we all went into the best room, and John and Nancy were married as strong as law and gospel could make them. It was the most solemn and impressive marriage-ceremony I ever performed or witnessed. I tell you, if I didn't feel inspired! I never



had such freedom, such power, in prayer. The way, broad and luminous, from my soul, seemed opened up into very heaven."

"Why, Mr. Humphrey! I never heard any thing more thrilling," cried the rapt Edith, who had risen from her seat, and stood bending towards the excited narrator of the story.

"And I never saw a more pleased man than was Dr. Field. I looked at him in a sort of wonder, so young, and so brave for the right. And that was how I made the acquaintance of Dr. Field, which answers your question, Miss Edith," he responded.

"What further happened?" asked Mrs. Grover, who was even more excited by the narration than was Edith.

"Well, the bride-wife became a mother that night. Dr. Field staid with her; and she had a fine, healthy boy, and she and John get on very well, and live by themselves. My wife and I went and paid them a visit about a month ago. She had then just been over to the Corners, and carried her boy to have Dr. Field prescribe for it. John took her, with his steers and cart, to the river, which was so deep he could not drive across it, and he set her over in a canoe, and she carried the baby in her arms to the Corners; and, will you believe it, Dr. Field got a buggy, and himself carried her and the child back to John, who had to remain with his steers."

"He is one to do such things," said Mrs. Grover.

"And that is where that story came from," said Edith, with a look at her mother.

"What story?" asked the minister.

"Of a girl going to him with a child, and his carrying them away. It was told as a thing which he was more directly connected with," said Mrs. Grover.

"Of course, the Corners fellows started it," said Mr.



Humphrey. "I never heard it, though, before. I have seen the doctor only once since, — when he returned from Cleveland with the Wilkins boy, two or three weeks ago. He came and spent the night with us ; and I found him a very cultivated, modest, high-souled man, — one to be loved and trusted, a man destined to the highest distinction. He only lacks the one great essential," and the parson sighed.

"Mr. Humphrey, you make him a paragon of the higher human virtues now," said Edith, smiling.

"They are human, as you say, merely human ; and, I am ashamed to say it, I never warned him, nor pointed him to the Master ; but I hope and pray that he is one of the chosen. It seems as if he must be."

"Did he tell you nothing of his former life?" asked Mrs. Grover.

"Not a word, and I never asked him. In fact, when one is with him, one is satisfied with him as he is, and don't feel like asking him things about himself. If he should be lost finally!" was the answer of the minister.

"Mother thinks," said Edith, "that there is some history, something that has happened to him, that has sent him from his friends perhaps ; while I think he says nothing of himself from a natural modest reserve. Why should he talk of himself to strangers, who ask him nothing? I see nothing remarkable in his being in Ohio, except the accident that placed him at the Corners."

After an early tea Mr. Humphrey reluctantly left for home, before the arrival of Dr. Field, who was detained till into the evening.

On the young man's return, something he detected in the appearance of his patient which called for action. He administered a new remedy which he had received from Cleveland, and after a hasty tea took his place by



the bedside, where he remained with little interruption till toward the next morning. In reply to an anxious question from Mrs. Grover, he said there was no occasion for alarm, that there might be a slight amendment, but nothing decisive could be looked for. As it sometimes occurred, he was at a late breakfast, — was inclined to breakfast as late as he could, — where he met only the two ladies.

“A very enthusiastic friend of yours was here yesterday,” said Edith, who observed something like unwonted languor in his appearance.

“An enthusiastic friend of mine! I have none. Oh, yes, the poor child!”

“It was not her, though he told us all about her,” archly. “Mr. Humphrey.”

“Mr. Humphrey! Oh, I wish I had been here! It would have been a comfort to see the stout-hearted, wrong-headed old veteran. He honestly believes that nine in ten of the human family were born to perdition, and manages to find comfort in that. But he is a practical Christian, if the earth holds one, in spite of his faith — so much better than his theology is he.”

The elder lady opened her eyes at this way of putting it. Without heeding her astonishment, the youth was about to resume, when Edith, with the tact of a woman, brought him back to what interested her more.

“He told us all about a certain wedding, and how a certain young M.D. brought it about. It was a genuine romance,” she said.

“Which interested us very much, you may be sure, Dr. Field, added the elder lady.

“The romance must have been imparted to it by the narrator, then,” said the young man. “The old gentleman must have taken liberties with the facts if he made them look romantic. It occurred among sordid souls, though it had many of the elements of interest in it.”



“The things which become so absorbing to others to hear of may not be at all pleasant to the actors in them, I suppose,” rejoined Edith, a little disgusted at the way he crushed the romance out of the tale which had very deeply impressed her.

“I wish Mr. Humphrey had remained,” said the young man, showing that he was not disposed to dwell on the episode which was uppermost in the mind of the ladies.

“We urged him to stay,” said Mrs. Grover, “but he could not.”

“What a practical Christian he is!” said the young man, returning to his theme, — “one who in his own person realizes the idea of a primitive disciple. For him, the Master is only a little way in advance, — has just gone along. He can still hear his voice, and see his fresh footmarks, and where he has brushed the dew from the grass and herbage, and the air is full of the fragrance of him; and he follows as an eager child after his father, or his mother rather.”

He had never before said so much; and the ladies heard him with a little surprise, and wondered what more he would say. Something had disturbed, perhaps bruised, his spirit, and he needed utterance for his own relief.

“I am always drawn to the Great Teacher on the man, or rather the woman side; for he is more near my ideal woman in love, tenderness, devotion, and soul to forgive. I feel allied to him on this human side. He not only understands, but will sympathize with me; and naturally, in his character as a physician I am most attracted by him. That office is holy to me, set by him apart from all callings. I think of him, stainless from birth, with perfect, healthy perceptions, and powerful instincts, with most acute senses, whose touch is full of power, and imparts a perfect, healthy nerve-force. So pure was he,



that all women at once instinctively trusted him ; so compassionate, that all men loved him ; so sweet, that all children fled to him ; so holy and stainless, that he stands at the head, the first and highest of all men, by virtue of which he sees and hears and knows, communes with angels and God, — an example of what man is perhaps to attain to, and to which the Teacher may finally raise the race of men.”

This utterance fell from the young physician as if involuntarily. There was an unwonted light in his eyes and a deep fervor in his voice, that for the moment held his listeners as in a spell. He paused ; and, bending his head in humiliation, in a subdued voice he said, —

“ For me, the office of physician is sacred. I would dedicate myself to it, try to be worthy of it. To me, all life is the most precious thing. Whatever menaces it is my enemy. Disease, pain, suffering, consecrates the sufferer to my best efforts. I feel degraded by taking money for this work. I would use all in this ministry. But I am so imperfect, weak, unknowing, unseeing, that I shrink from my own unworthiness, and am at times half tempted to abandon myself to a lower calling.” The depth and tremor of his voice left no doubt of his perfect sincerity, and the ladies were not unmoved by his words.

“ Ladies,” he said, rising from his chair at the table, “ I think this confession of my conscious weakness authorizes you to ask me to retire from your case.”

“ Why, doctor, do you want to leave it ? ” asked Mrs. Grover in alarm.

“ It is the last thing I wish to do. It would almost break my heart to do it.”

“ Why do you talk so — so very strangely of yourself ? ”

“ It is not strange. It is my frank estimate of myself, uttered to those interested in it,” he answered.



"Has there arisen any thing about my father that you fear you don't understand?" asked Edith.

"Nothing. You may see, Miss Grover," addressing her, "that I may perhaps ride a horse, and compel an evil-hearted old man to permit two foolish children to do what they can to recover from their folly, and yet utterly fail to realize my conception of what a man should be."

He had arisen, and he now walked out of the room.

"Mother," said Edith, "I would like to quote his saying of Mr. Humphrey against himself. He is better than his profession of faith. How he surprised me! And what a revelation he made of himself! What could have induced him to do it, I wonder?"

"I see nothing remarkable in the mere utterance. The matter was surprising. His estimate of Mr. Humphrey was just, very striking, and beautiful; and what an analysis of the human side of our Saviour! And this led to the contrast with his own actual self as he appeared in the light of the Great Example. One without confidences, alone, and brooding much, — I presume our apparent interest and sympathy tempted him to utter his inner self as he did. I am glad he did. It was what one capable of such a conception might have said. It marks the elevation of his soul."

"I don't think I am glad," said Edith. "If he had stopped short of himself — It is the only consciousness of weakness I have seen in him." This was said a little sadly.

"Do you like him the less for it?"

"Mother, a question of liking can never arise between us," said the girl evasively in a low, grave voice.

Her mother regarded her a moment in silence, and then said, —

"He certainly has a most elevated estimate of woman."



“Of woman,—but woman in the abstract. I shall certainly trust him as surely as I did before. And it shows that he modestly estimates himself. But he had presented to me the embodiment of manly strength and completeness, with its confidence in itself,” said Edith.

“And you did not want him to shatter the image. I think it remains quite perfect. And yet all men have their weak moments, or where should we come in?”

“I don’t regard it weak, after all,” said Edith thoughtfully, without explaining herself.

“He went away a little humiliated, and will never speak of himself in that way to us again,” said Mrs. Grover.

“I certainly admire his enthusiasm, and it does not take from a man, in my estimation, that he should be enthusiastic,” said Edith.

“Such men usually do things where their enthusiasm is in their work,” added her mother.

“He is poetic, and undoubtedly possesses genius, and such temperaments have their ups and downs,” said Edith.

“I call this one of his ups,” replied the mother.

“Well, I think it was one of his downs,—down where we saw him quite distinctly,” answered Edith, as if ending the discussion.

“I think,” said her mother, who did not want to drop the subject, “that to the woman who receives his entire confidence her communings with him would be delightful.”

“To the woman who fully shared and appreciated it. He loves only his profession. He pursues it for its own sake. It is all-sufficient to him. He is utterly indifferent to all beside. Even his heroic conduct in the affair of this poor Nancy, whom I mean to go and see, had its root back in this absorbing devotion which subordinates all other attributes, if he has any,” said Edith, with her face turned away from her mother.



“Edith, you blind girl!”

On his way back to the sick ward, the young man encountered Ingles, with whom he was on the pleasantest terms, and who now purposely put herself in his way. He had become a great favorite of hers.

“Good-mornin’, Dr. Fields,” she said very sonorously, as usual. “I’ve found out about that air baby. It is young John Dykeses, an’ you was only takin’ on it back to ’im.”

“Ah! But then I was with another man’s wife, you know! That was awful!”

“But it was in the daytime. Mr. Fields, why don’ ye get a wife o’ your own? An’ you a doctor?” asked the spinster gravely.

“A wife! What could I do with a wife, running about all the time? Who would be my wife, do you suppose?”

“Look behind ye,” coming close to him, speaking low and earnestly, and then hurrying off.

Edith, who was then coming slowly along behind him, joined, and accompanied him to her father’s room. He had not dared look around.



## CHAPTER VI.

MRS. GROVER REGARDS DR. FIELD AS A GENTLEMAN. —  
EDITH ELECTS HIM AS HER PHYSICIAN.

SOMETHING in the manner of Dr. Field during the day, out of the usual, as of disquiet or anxiety, rendered the observant Edith more solicitous than ordinarily. Was her father worse? Was a crisis approaching? What did he fear or expect? Or was it something peculiar to himself, not connected with her father? She knew he had many patients, and some of them were very sick, about whom she and her mother inquired. He was reticent even about them, which her mother thought was strange. In the evening he merely said he would play nurse himself, although he had kept that part through most of the preceding night. Somehow, since his words of the morning, a subtle sympathy seemed to control the actions of these two. Field had returned from his round unusually early; and, though little conversation occurred between them, they were much of the time near each other, and Edith found approach to him much easier. The cloud conjured up by their first meeting in her mind was quite dissipated, or had for the time sunk below the horizon. As he sat in the anteroom, she went up to him.

“Doctor, I must be permitted to share your vigil to-night.” Her manner, as usual, was quiet, and her voice low, with something of decision in it, as if she announced a conclusion. The young man looked up into her face as he answered, —



“Certainly, if that is your wish.”

“I am impressed that you expect something, — the crisis perhaps?” askingly.

“Your intuitions do not mislead you, Miss Grover. I do look for a change before many hours. You are cool and firm. Your father, as I think, is just in the closing or opening hand of a crisis.”

Edith drew a long, quivering breath, but gave no other sign of agitation.

“I wish to be with him through it. Let my mother sleep past it, if she may. Doctor” — a pause — “what may we expect?” firmly.

“I cannot forecast. The battle has been very even: a little may turn it. We may only watch and” —

“And pray. Do you believe in prayer, Mr. Field?”

“I do, and I do not. I cannot bring myself to think, that, in answer to supplication, God changes his laws, or suspends them.”

“May it not be one of his agencies?”

“I don’t say that it is not. In that event, he must inspire the prayer. If I believed that it was an agency in the ordinary affairs of life, I should abandon science and medicine, become as holy as I might, and pray instead.”

“Does not God bless effort and means?”

“If he contributes any part, why not the whole, Miss Grover?”

“He certainly has given us powers and faculties to be exercised, Mr. Field, and I think prayer and devotion are among them. In what way do you believe in prayer? what is its office in your theory?”

“As a self-preparation to purify, elevate, strengthen. By a steady, strong, determined effort in a proper frame of mind and spirit, which a true man or woman may often have, the soul may be lifted into a serene contemplation



of God. One may draw himself to a much higher level, into a purer and more bracing atmosphere, a clearer and broader light, and may thus render himself clearer, stronger, and firmer. One thus makes a real gain in courage, hope, and power. It is the tonic of mind as well as spirit, acting indirectly on the mysterious nerve structures."

"Oh, that is much!" cried the assured girl. "Do you ever thus pray?"

"Often — I try to."

"Have you done so to-night?" coming a step nearer to him, and speaking very softly and low, and enveloping him with the atmosphere of her presence, — "for my father, and for power to help him?"

"Yes. He who would give of his own life would omit nothing which might make the offering effective," was the strong, clear answer.

"And this for my father, Dr. Field?" dropping her face into her hands for an instant, with a rush of emotion. "I shall pray, and oh, so fervently!" she said, losing her voice in a swell of deep feeling.

"It is a woman's right, her refuge, her fortress. We all, even those who would avoid the stains of earth, all feel that woman is more to God, and, argue as man will, he always feels that God does heed woman's prayer as he does not that of man. I am sure that a man in a strait would feel glad to know that a true woman was at earnest prayer to help him through. In this wide world is there such heaven-sent help for man as woman?" The last was as if to himself, an unconsciously uttered reflection.

The depth and sincerity of the utterance of this little speech was very grateful to the girl's heart. Little more was said between them, united in a pious vigil, and un-



consciously attracted by the subtle charm which drew their deep, rich natures to oneness, and wove itself silently and certainly about them, untouched with a color of self, or of a direct thought of each other. The unknowing and hardly breathing form in their presence was the point of union, where their souls and labors met in a common sympathy. When that ceases to bind them, what will their fortune be? For the time, every act of care and attention to their charge they did together. The skilled eye and touch of the youth were at once interpreted to the maiden's quick and sympathizing apprehension.

The mystery of night deepened, the breeze fell to a wail, a sigh—to silence. The abundant dew crystallized; the eastern stars passed the zenith, and dropped toward the western horizon; and the vigil became solemn, ghostly. In the later hours the maiden for a brief space withdrew. On her return, the young man said, —

“You were in most earnest prayer?”

“Yes.”

“I knew it; I felt it. You asked for clearness, for strength. I was in doubt as to the time when we ought to administer an important medicine. All at once it came to me, and I feel that the time has now come. I only waited for you.”

Together they gave it.

“Now, I think you would do well to retire. I am very sure your father will know you in the morning.”

“Let me remain,” pleadingly.

Just as the first clear light of day whitened the windows, he called her to notice how gently her father breathed, and the change in the surface of his face and hands. His voice had the thrill of deep emotion.

Two hours later, in the light of the sun, which poured



a golden flood through a remote window, the eyes of the father, from the depth of prostration, struggled up to the eyes of the daughter with recognition and the old unclouded love. She bent with her fresh lips to his, cracked and blackened, and lifting her eyes, as she arose, to the face of her companion, saw tears of devout thankfulness falling from them.

“He is safe,” he whispered her, “and I dare not think that it is not in answer to your prayers.”

“We accept him from God through your hands,” was her fervid answer.

And from that lower plane, the tender, wistful eyes looked up into the, to them, wondrously beautiful faces over them, both so dear, so like the faces of the blessed, — one so new, of which they would have questioned, and both to forever after stand surrounded by a common halo in the eyes which now saw them.

Jóy in the house of Grover !

Joy in all the borders round about. Tender, anxious, long-continued care, under the eye of skill, will only realize the fruits of the victory. I need only incidentally hereafter refer to the upbuilding and uprising of the prostrate man.

On the third of the succeeding mornings Edith arose a little languid and heavy. The unwonted feeling brought to her mind the warning she had received. The quick eye of the young M.D. detected the shadow. As they sat down to the table, he turned to her with a look she understood ; and with a demure smile laid her hand — the same she once withdrew from his eyes — with its fair wrist exposed on the table before him. He laid the tips of his fingers lightly on the throbbing pulse, and lifted his gaze to her face, when she exposed her tongue to his inspection. The gravity of this proceeding alarmed the mother.



“You are banished from active life for forty-eight hours, a tepid foot-bath, Ingles’s herb-drink, warm, with an infusion which I must furnish, and moderate perspiration, a powder to-night, one to-morrow morning, and a horseback ride the next day.” Gravely was the sentence pronounced, with a smile hovering over the bland mouth.

“Yes, thank you, doctor — for the last,” with a smile breaking the languid face into dimples from the fair patient.

“A horseback ride day after to-morrow!” said Mrs. Grover, immensely relieved from momentary apprehension, “and the doctor will administer his own prescription. I am sure nobody can do it so well,” she added.

“The last item,” said Edith. “I will excuse him from the rest.”

“If permitted,” he responded gravely. “To attend Miss Grover would be the very great privilege of a gentleman: I am only a very humble doctor,” his eyes and voice falling, — the only gallant speech they heard from him.

“I elected to regard you as a gentleman from the first,” said Mrs. Grover with warmth.

“He is my physician,” said the young lady, with a look to her mother; and then she gave her another, a little startled, as he replied, —

“I shall not forget my position,” to Edith. “You are very considerate, Mrs. Grover, and I shall certainly remember your kindness.”

Mrs. Grover heard this only as a well-spoken response to their words. The younger felt that it had a deeper meaning; that her inconsiderate speech was taken by him as indicating the only relation he was to sustain to her. Little more was said. All became aware of the presence of a restraint upon the intercourse of the young



people ; and Mrs. Grover looked from the grave face of the young man to the now graver face of Edith, which wore an almost pained expression, in a vain effort to detect its cause.

The day for Edith's re-appearance was bright with the sun and bracing air ; and she came forth radiant with recovered spirits and vigor, heightened by the steady gain of her father. Dr. Field was, for him, in exuberant spirits, which detracted nothing from the gayety of Edith. At a little before three in the afternoon, in her riding-dress, hat and plumes, of deep wine-color, which added to the tint on her dark, clear cheek, and deepened the crimson of her ripe mouth, with high and joyous life in her eyes, Edith stepped out with the young cavalier for her prescribed horseback exercise. The afternoon was the residue of one of those yellow, creamy days, full of voluptuous sensuousness, when to breathe in the open air, with freedom from the cares of the common world, with a full consciousness of existence, was blessedness. Bill had the horses, Jilt and Dick, in the presence of a collection of appreciative spectators of the mount and go-off. The young man examined the girths of the lady's saddle, took Jilt by the bridle, and led her to Edith's side, gracefully bent forward to her with his hand for her foot ; and, novel as the method was to her, she stepped within it, and found herself transferred to her saddle with an ease and grace very charming. Her foot was placed in the stirrup, her ample skirt adjusted, and the gathered reins placed within her grasp by a hand evincing practice in that part of a cavalier's duties. A moment, and, in his saddle, he was at her side. Slowly they walked past her admiring mother, whom they saluted ; rode down the slope and lifted the rise, in a graceful gallop, and were off, — to her eyes, as brave and fair a couple as e'er the sun shone



on. As they disappeared, she was conscious of a glow of pride in her bosom, and a tear of joy in her eye.

The dissipation of the dread, and the release from the constant strain of the last three weeks, the buoyancy of returned hope, the exhilaration of restored vigor, the glow, warmth, and color of the outside world, the springy leap of her mettled horse, the free companionship of the manly youth who kept tryst with her through the darkest hours, and on whose brave heart she had so confidently relied, full of young life, and for once, perhaps, permitting her to feel the glow of a manly admiration, conspired to half intoxicate the soul and keen sense of the young woman, with an exquisite enjoyment bordering on ecstasy, to which the kindling pulse of her companion fully responded. Secure in themselves, in the freedom of surrounding nature, the gold, the sun, the wine of the wondrous hours, were theirs. They paused a moment on the crown of a swell overlooking a wide extent of country, and with their eyes swept valley, river, hill, and wood to choose their way. By one impulse, they turned down the river, with its bright tide on their left, bearing the golden beams on its bosom, and throwing from its broken mirror the orange, crimson, and brown forest that crowned its high western bank, while on their right, for two or three miles, lay the brown fields under the autumn sun, sloping down from their woody margins to the fair river's edge. Beyond, their road lost itself in the wilderness of trees, on which hung the bright torn banners of October. They gave the first minutes to the exquisite sense of rapid motion—wild—flying over the earth, spurned from under the feet of their blooded steeds, the beat and play of pulse, in which the spirited animals had their full share.

Then came a relaxed pace, and peals of merry laugh-



ter from the heart of Edith, in which the young man accompanied her. He laughed because she did, and she, because she could not help it, and then they laughed together. The mute wit and wine, the gay humor of youth and stirred souls, were irresistible. Then came words meaning nothing, only bright bubbles of the spirit breaking at the lips, and provoking more laughter; then the words with young life, and gay with its warm color, bearing fragments of thought, and flashes of wit, and little incidents, meaning little to the intellect, but much to the heart, gayly told. Little bits of poetry, with snatches of song and quaint or tender couplets and rhymes, escaped as they entered the autumn-painted wood.

No word or thought of their brief past, none of any possible future, only the joyous now, as if it would forever remain theirs.

The light wind breathed through the woods, showering them with ripe, fruity leaves, the aroma of which they breathed. Millions of brown nuts rattled down, strewing the leafy ground they passed over, recalling gay nuttings of more childish years. Countless myriads of the passenger-pigeons were rioting in noisy glee in the beech-thickets, and black and gray squirrels leaped across the road, or sat on the limbs of trees by its side, unscared by their passage.

As the exultant bound of spirit effervesced, their speed diminished, and the bubbles of mirth, laughter, and song, broke on the air, and gradually subsided. Feeling and emotion made themselves felt, and found expression; unconsciously deeper and yet more hidden thoughts and sentiments flashed out, and took form in apt words, yet so naturally that neither was surprised till each was master of the innermost soul of the other. How clear and



transparent the sources and springs of thought and emotion of each lay under the gaze of the other, and neither had aught that they cared to conceal, yet never approaching by word the feeling of one for the other, if such existed in fact or possibility! What should keep these two souls asunder, that seemed to tremble in a near approach of oneness? Did either think or wonder what had so drawn them out to each other, made communion so easy and dear? I know not. I only know that the maiden finally became suddenly silent; that the youth stopped in the midst of an unfinished sentence. The sun had fallen into the tops of the western trees. The light in the forest through which they rode was undergoing the weird transmutations of dying day, and shadowy fingers were weaving the charm of darkness and mystery which deepens into night. Without a word, the two paused, turned their horses' heads, looked one instant into each other's eyes, which seemed to open to the transparent depths of their souls. They said no word. As their horses turned their heads towards home, they were abandoned to an emulous impulse of speed, and soon passed the wood, to where day still lay warm on the open fields and eastern forest. Here they restrained their almost headlong speed, and Edith's musical voice was again heard in bright and gay words. The young man attempted to respond. The spell on him was too deep, and both relapsed into silence; and so they returned, just at deepest twilight.

At the tea-table, that evening, Mrs. Grover observed an unusual glow on the cheek, and an unwonted light in the coy eyes, of Edith, and she also saw almost a sad expression on the face of Dr. Field. Both seemed inclined to silence; and, although Edith warmly declared



that she had never enjoyed a ride so much, she noticed that her medical cavalier did not recommend its repetition. Then she recalled for the first time the words of Edith, that he was her physician ; and she, too, looked grave.



## CHAPTER VII.

WHICH DEALS WITH A MYSTERY, — TWO OF THEM.

THE sick man, with the freakiness of one whose mind was as badly shattered as his body, took a great fancy to his young physician long before he could comprehend his obligations to him, and when awake could not endure his absence from his room, and was never content unless Mrs. Grover, Edith, and Field were all in constant attendance. As he recovered strength, which was slowly, he exhibited the temper and caprice of a naturally strong, self-willed man. In some way he had retained a dream-like memory of two beautiful faces bending together over him, which he identified as those of Edith and the doctor; and when his head grew stronger, and vision clearer, they became very intimately and tenderly associated in his mind. When he was able to be propped up in bed, and moved from one couch to another, and looked forward to a resumption of his usual apparel, and of getting up and out, his strengthened perception detected something peculiar in their manner toward each other, something of a grave reserve on the part of Edith, and of distance on that of Field. This last, Mrs. Grover had noticed from the day of the horseback excursion, and which quite accounted for the reserve on the part of Edith. As timee lapsed, this coldness increased; and Mrs. Grover observed, that, when Dr. Field returned to the house, he never inquired for Edith if she was out of the room, and seldom addressed her when present, be-



yond the formal recognition of ordinary meeting. When he was with the convalescent, Edith was usually present, and the mother saw that their bearing toward each other was a source of disquiet to him. Of course he had been told all the details of his illness, and the care he had received from the young doctor, whom he had met before his prostration, also of every thing known of the young man, and of the mystery which Mrs. Grover felt sure covered some of the later years of his life. One day, after the young man went out on his round of visits, he asked very abruptly, —

“What is there between Dr. Field and Edith?”

“Nothing that I know of. Why do you ask?”

“They have been constantly together for nearly two months, must know each other well, and one would naturally think they would like one another; but they seldom speak to each other, and avoid each other.”

“I am sure that is Dr. Field’s fault. So far as I know, Edith from the first treated him with the kindest consideration. But for some cause he has been distant and reserved toward her, and she is compelled to have something of the same manner toward him.”

“It is very strange. He is certainly a gentleman; and a gentleman shows even an ordinary woman some slight observance, when he meets her as constantly as Dr. Field meets Edith, who is not an ordinary woman. How long has this thing been going on?”

“Alway, with a few striking exceptions. On two or three occasions I have noticed the signs of great warmth of feeling on his part toward her.”

“Which she repelled, probably,” added Mr. Grover.

“I think she was pleased with it,” replied Mrs. Grover.

“Has she ever said any thing about it to you?”

“Not a word; nor have I thought it best to ask her.”



“You know that in her heart she cherishes contempt for all young men, and she has made Dr. Field feel it.”

“I know she has for the ordinary young gentlemen whom she has met. But she has the most profound respect and admiration for Dr. Field.” This last was said with emphasis.

“You are a woman, and can see into these things, and must have thought about it: what is it?”

“I think the young man has felt himself very powerfully drawn to her, as was natural, and is held back by something he cannot, dare not, break over. He seems the heart and soul of honor and conscience. He certainly is very much taken with her, and only avoids her because he feels compelled to. Then their acquaintance has been very short.”

“He is poor and proud, has been awfully talked about, may think that he is under a cloud, is very sensitive, and I can sympathize with him,” said Mr. Grover. “With all a man’s push and dash, he is often a coward where a woman is concerned. He would rather undertake a squadron of Wicked Dicks than approach such a girl as your daughter, Mrs. Grover. And then he probably comes of a family of nobodies.”

“If there is any thing in blood here in the woods, his is as good as anybody’s. Such breeding don’t come by two or three years of study, or good society. There must be some tie, some old engagement that he has gone away from, but cannot escape. Do you know, with all we have seen of him, he has never said a word of his life, or history, of family, birthplace, or kindred?”

“Does he ever speak of himself?”

“No; and, when we told him what Mr. Humphrey said of his brave conduct, he dismissed it rather shortly.”

“You never asked him any thing of himself, I presume?”



“Well, no, of course. How could I?”

“Why not, in all that must have passed between you here, — and you a Yankee woman? He is not here as often, and does not stay as much as he did,” he remarked.

“He thinks it unnecessary, I presume; and then his practice has much increased, and he has some cases like yours,” she answered.

“Oh, dear! I hope he’ll get to them before old Warren. Did he ever say any thing of him, or allude to the lies told about himself?”

“Not a word.”

“More mystery! A woman has a way of losing herself, and winding up every thing in a mystery, that she may fancy there is a romance in it,” he responded a little peevishly.

The next day Dr. Field, as usual, aided in getting the patient up; and, after he had been made comfortable on a capacious sofa, Mr. Grover, in the presence of the ladies, turned to him, and asked, —

“By the way, Dr. Field, was the Rev. Burgess Field of Northampton a relative of yours?”

“He was my father.”

“Your father?” from the elder Grovers in concert.

“Why!” exclaimed Mrs. Grover, quite excited by his answer, “he married Ellen Winder, the dearest friend I ever had.”

“She was my mother,” answered the young man very quietly.

“Your mother, your mother! You Ellen Winder’s child? And you came here as a stranger, and did all this, and we never knew you — you never tell us?” a good deal moved.

“Why should I, Mrs. Grover? Had I supposed that any thing in the world of me or mine was of the least in-



terest to you, I would have found some way to tell you of it. I never had a secret, that I can remember," smiling.

"How mysterious!" said Mr. Grover to his wife. — "I knew your father very well. He was the most promising man of his day," to young Field.

"I confess," said Mrs. Grover, recovering from her surprise, "that I have wanted to know something about you, but did not feel that I could ask you; and as you said nothing about it — well, I have a right to now. Tell us all about yourself, your father and mother and their family."

"My father and mother are both dead," sadly. "They had no other child." As he paused here, an awkward silence ensued, which he seemed little inclined to break.

"I knew little of your parents after their marriage. What was their course of life and fortune?" asked Mrs. Grover, a little embarrassed by his period.

"My father gave up his church — had to — before I can remember. Some question arose of his orthodoxy, as my mother since told me. He came in some way to think there was but one God, who would manage to have his way, and he gave up his charge voluntarily. Soon after, he removed to Warren in Trumbull County, near you. He never pursued his original calling there, but attempted to establish and build up an academy. In this he used up much of my mother's means, and died when I was five or six years old. What my mother had was in land and the academy buildings, and we remained in Ohio. She died when I was sixteen, some ten, or nearly ten, years ago."

His voice fell, and almost broke here, and he walked toward a window. On his return,

"You had neither brother nor sister, you say?" observed Mrs. Grover, moved.



“Neither, and no relative in Ohio.”

“What did you do? Tell us of yourself,” very kindly.

“There is nothing to tell. Nothing ever happened to me till my advent at the Corners. I went to school till I used up the remnant of my mother’s property. Of course I had lived wholly with and for her. Never was there such” — After a pause, “A child’s mother is his ideal, as you know, Mr. Grover; and, as far as a rattle-pated boy might, I followed what I fancied would be her wish, and tried to become something like what she would have had me. At last I was fitted for college, and entered Harvard a soph. An old bachelor uncle, a brother of my mother” —

“Philip?” asked Mr. Grover.

“Yes. Well, uncle Philip, for whom I was named, undertook to see me through, for that reason perhaps. He died, however, before I graduated, and prudently left his property to the church — it may have been to balance the account of an undevout life — with no provision for his namesake. I may have been born for the study of medicine, and what is unusual, perhaps, early felt a strong inclination to pursue it; and, though I never graduated from the college proper, I took a very thorough medical course, saw much practice in the hospital, spent a year in the New-York hospitals, and another in Philadelphia, and returned to Warren last spring, undertook to walk to Cleveland with the idea of establishing myself there. I tried to make a short cut across lots, lost my way, and brought up at the Corners. While there I went to see the Wilkins boy, whom I undertook to treat, and became a resident of that morally salubrious little burg. There, Mrs. Grover,” with a sudden glance at Edith, “I am sorry to have dispelled any idea you may have kindly given shelter to, that there could be any thing of the least



interest in the career of a young fellow in which nothing of the unusual has occurred. I am almost sorry that no irregularity marked my school or college days, no indiscretion in social life, not even the most innocent flirtation, nothing but my luckless meeting with poor little Dave Wilkins's father."

"Do you call that luckless?" asked Edith earnestly, — "the saving of his limb, perhaps his life? the rescue of poor Nancy? Is my father's life nothing to you?"

"Forgive me, forgive me, Miss Grover," with warmth. "All these are much, very much, to me, nearly my all. God willed these things as much as he wills any thing; and, that I was permitted in some way to be the agent in producing them, I am profoundly grateful. But these are not all a man's life. It was said by one of old, that a man's life is fortunate can only be determined when it is completed."

This ground was felt to be delicate, if not dangerous, and no one wished to tread it further.

"Your mother was my dearest friend and schoolmate," said Mrs. Grover, approaching the youth with a new interest and a sense of proprietorship, and scanning his person over. "Your hair and eyes are your mother's. Oh, dear! and so you are Ellen's child! I have special claim on you, and some right and interest in you, on her account. I never saw your father. She was married before I was, and we were separated before that event. Only to think!"

"I have been so unaccustomed to having any one manifest an interest in me, that your kindness quite unmans me, Mrs. Grover," replied the youth ingenuously, with a little tremor in his voice. "I assure you my mother was worthy all your love, and her son shall not be ungrateful for your consideration for both."



The disclosure of young Field's parentage, and the new subjects which it brought up, were the theme of conversation at the lunch, now served in Mr. Grover's room; and they and he continued to be discussed after he rode away to answer a new, distant call. To say that his deportment towards the Grovers in any way changed after this incident would be incorrect. Mrs. Grover insisted that he make their house his fixed abode; instead of which, as Mr. Grover slowly grew up out of the need of constant attention from him, he withdrew it and himself. He no longer spent his nights there; though in his increased labor he continued to ride Wicked Dick, leaving him at the Corners, or at his own stable, as was convenient.

The revelation of young Field's history left Mrs. Grover as far as ever from an explanation of his conduct toward Edith, which she so deeply deplored. She had never heard of that unfortunate ride in the stage, and the mystery was to remain unexplained.

One event of late autumn was the attack of Dr. Warren by the supposed awful typhus. Almost every thing that appeared that fall, after the illness of Mr. Grover, marked with any thing in the least peculiar, was popularly supposed to be typhus-fever, and the young physician was summoned to it. He was called to Dr. Warren at once, and promptly met the call. The Grovers were afterwards immensely amused with his graphic sketch of that first visit. Dr. Warren's ludicrous alarm prevented his distinguishing an assault of gastritis from the dreaded typhus, and the young M.D. playfully mentioned that the new patient found quite instant relief from the famous cattle prescription which had given the young man a part of his early unenviable notoriety.

“How grateful he should be that you had mastered



bovine diseases!" said Mr. Grover, laughing over the ludicrous picture of the alarmed M.D.

Dr. Warren's recovery was speedy, and added greatly to the rapidly rising fame of the young man.

Winter intervened. Mr. Grover was on his feet, and accustoming himself to the vast oversize of his garments, and to quarrel peevishly over his prescribed allowance of food. He began to give attention to affairs, and the family to discuss and arrange for their intended winter sojourn in the merry and thriving city of Cleveland; and Field, whom the elders called by his first name from the day of the discovery of his parentage, was daily more and more drifting out of the current of their life, when an incident occurred which led to a temporary renewal, and in a striking way, of his professional interest in them.

He called there one day to exchange horses. He took his own to the stable; and while Bill, who would not permit him to serve himself, was placing the other under caparison, he stepped to the house. In passing an open shed near the kitchen, he saw lying under it the prostrate form of Walter, whom the reader may remember as the epileptic son, now suffering from a paroxysm of that disease. Field was familiar with the form of the poor lad, had admired his fine proportion, but had little opportunity to cultivate his acquaintance, nor had his case ever been brought to his attention. He ran to the prostrate boy, extended his limbs, turned him on his back, and with his handkerchief wiped his oozing lips. In this act he passed one hand under the child's head, which had turned a little over one side. Instantly he placed the other hand on the opposite side, and, with his fingers and acute sense of touch, examined the cranium with the utmost care. He arose to his feet, and stood for a moment looking down upon the unconscious form with amazement. Then ten-



derly lifting the poor child, he bore him into the nearest room, which happened to be the kitchen, and laid him on the large table. The act of bringing the boy in, the placing him on the table, and the excited manner of Dr. Field, usually so cool and collected, produced a momentary alarm among the women at work there, which was immediately communicated to the whole household. The first impression was, that Walter was dead. Edith was the first to enter the room, who saw at once only the ordinary appearances, with which she was unhappily familiar.

“I think there is nothing unusual,” she said. “I forgot that you have never seen him in this condition,” surprised at the young man’s manner, and tenderly wiping the still unconscious boy’s mouth.

“Nothing unusual! Nothing unusual!” he cried. “No, blindness and blundering are the usual. See here, Edith,” — he had never called her by that name, and now taking the hand which he had only touched with the tip of his fingers before, and carrying it to the side of Walter’s head, and passing it closely over the surface, — “examine both sides. You find a depression here,” putting his finger on the point. “He has received a heavy blow here, probably. The under plate of the cranium was broken, and forced in upon the brain. My God!” with intense energy, while tears sprang to his eyes, “the years of darkness and untold suffering that have been his! Had he not had the vitality and vigor of a young lion” — pausing, and then as if to himself — “now I know why I was dropped at the Corners.”

“Oh! can you help him? Can you restore him?” cried Edith excitedly, catching the meaning of his last words. “If you will, all that my life holds, all that my prayers can gain from Heaven, shall be yours,” she said with deepest fervor, and bending down she placed her lips to those of the still unknowing boy.



“I should be worthy of no great reward. I would grieve you” — He interrupted himself, and instantly and coldly said, “No high degree of skill is requisite for his relief, Miss Grover. Whoever can with reasonable care make an incision, and remove a portion of the shell of a gourd, should be equal to this,” with a touch of sarcasm.

Edith looked at him for a moment in pained surprise, and then said sadly, “His case has been submitted to the most skilled in the land. Do not think, Dr. Field, that he has been neglected.”

“Neglected! Forgive my unguarded words. You little know my estimate of you,” turning from her.

Walter now began to indicate the usual signs of recovery, Mrs. Grover entered the room, and Edith made known to her the discovery and declaration of Dr. Field. She was quite overcome. Upon his questioning them, both Mrs Grover and Edith could recall a fall which the child received not long before the first manifestation of epilepsy. He had climbed up several rounds of a ladder standing against the side of a new building, from which he fell amid bits of timber and stone. The party adjourned to the room of Mr. Grover, which had been reached by a rumor that something had happened to Walter. Here Dr. Field, with much care, went over the case, and declared with emphatic confidence, that, in the present state of the art, a surgeon of ordinary skill could, by a not difficult or dangerous operation, restore the child. The father heard him with utter astonishment.

“Can you do it, Dr. Field? I am sure you can, if it can be done,” he demanded.

“I can.”

“Will you?”

“I will, if I am deemed the proper man to do it.”

“Do it! do it! And I will give you half I have. One-



half of all my holdings in this world shall be yours," excitedly.

The young man remained silent a moment, and then said, "Mr. Grover, the suddenness of this — this discovery, the newness and gravity of the idea of a recovery to you, as well as its importance, excites you — you all," glancing over their faces, and permitting his eyes to rest a moment on those of Edith. "Naturally you overestimate the skill, and perhaps the danger, of the operation in the case. Now, I assure you that it does not require a high degree of skill, and the danger is comparatively slight, and the compensation should be moderate. I shall hesitate under the temptation of the — the unusual offers. It makes no difference whose, if competent hands do the actual work. The accident which led to the knowledge that it might be done has happened. If I may be left solely to the exquisite consciousness of having relieved and restored this child as my reward, I will gladly, reverently undertake it, and bless God for the opportunity."

"Make your own terms, make your own terms, my dear Philip," said Mrs. Grover.

"If you knew the joy of the real physician over the recovery of an almost lost patient, so like the joy of the angels over the return of a lost soul, you could estimate the influence of money with him," said the youth, with enthusiasm.

"In your practice, Dr. Field," said the now cool Edith, "do you not find so much of this high compensation unalloyed with lucre, that you can afford to permit some of those whom you benefit to express their appreciation in this as in other forms?"

"Miss Grover, I find it the hardest to approach — to answer you, I mean;" and there was a thrill in his words as he sunk a little abashed at the warmth with



which he turned to her. "Your sarcasm is just. My compensation in the way indicated quite equals my deservings, however my more common wants are met. Let me first render this service, if I may."

"I really did not mean to be sarcastic," said the girl, with a sweet sincerity.

He then explained that in a case of such gravity, involving many points, few practitioners would enter upon it without the benefit of a consultation of some of the able and experienced of the profession. He suggested that Walter be taken to Cleveland, where the best aid and appliances could be secured which the West offered. As for himself, he had no doubt but that a council would decide he was right, and the same authority could select the surgeon to do the manual operation.

The earnest discussion of this, to the Grovers, great subject, during the ensuing three or four days, resulted in their determination to go to Cleveland as soon as the condition of Mr. Grover permitted, which his physician thought might be at the end of ten days. Edwards was despatched to the city to secure rooms, and make other necessary arrangements for the winter there, and meantime Field also had to secure four or five days to attend them there. Mrs. Grover declared she should detain him in the city a week. Among other things she wanted to introduce him to several young ladies there, and may have been willing that he should see Edith in society and surrounded by them.

Who can tell of all that may have been in her woman's mind.



## CHAPTER VIII.

DISCOURSETH PLEASANTLY OF CLEVELAND IN THE OLDEN TIME, AND OF WHAT HAPPENED THEN.

THE young Clevelander of to-day can have no idea of the Cleveland of the day of which I write. The whole city, which now embraces Newburgh, Doan's Corners, and grasps Rocky River, then lay between Lake, River, and Erie Streets. Euclid Avenue was a solitary highway, running out east, and along a ridge parallel with the lake coast; and Woolland stole away through the woods toward Warrensville. Forests lay between the town and far-off Newburgh. Central Block stood alone on "the Flats;" and cows fed on "Scranton's Bottoms." The Creek was a lively place, the heart of the provincial city. Though in the woods, it had not then grown to be the proud "Forest City," the second on the Lakes. That narrow, crooked river was in constant commotion, crowded with lake craft, and five or six huge steamers coming and going daily, with the thronged wharves, alive with hacks, drays, passengers, sailors, and laborers.

The survivors of that far-off time were long since lost, — pushed from their pleasant places, and overrun by the eager throngs of strangers who came to possess, build, and rebuild the town, and compel her to overflow, and absorb all her neighborhoods, whose smoke and incense, whose dust and clamor, hang like a noisy cloud over all the region where empties the Cuyahoga into Erie. In the day of the Grovers it was a most important point, with



wealth, character, culture, fashion, and a name of its own, and was, as it has ever remained, the residence of eminent men, with a circle having quite as much claim and real ground for pretension at that time as any which have graced it since.

The American (there still) was the leading hotel, and with the Franklin, nearly opposite, monopolized the better class of travelling guests. Edwards secured fine rooms at the American at a cost per week which would now hardly pay the bills of a day at the Weddell and Kennard.

In mid December the Grovers took possession of their winter-quarters, accompanied by Dr. Field. The sleighing was splendid; and Field drove the team in the passenger sleigh, and another conveyed the baggage. It was a sparkling winter day. Edith occupied the seat with the driver; and notwithstanding the presence of the elders, which was no restraint, the young people abandoned themselves almost as much to the inspiration of gay spirits as on the memorable afternoon of their horseback excursion. They reached Cleveland by mid afternoon, and were quite prepared to receive a few intimate friends who called that evening, conspicuous among whom was Mr. Severton, and two or three young gentlemen honored with his intimacy, — young men of fashion and fortune, and who paid marked attention to Miss Grover, and were made acquainted with young Field, who, had he been very observing of such things, would have discovered that she would be surrounded by very warm and assiduous admirers during her residence in the city. For him, he was pre-occupied. He had never looked upon the young lady as an object open to his approach and competition, and there was a graver matter demanding his more immediate attention. Did he ever think of Edith in connection with that? Did he ever recall her exuberant declaration to him? I do not know.



At three o'clock the next afternoon he met the president and faculty of the medical college, and prominent physicians called for consultation on the case of Walter. At first there was much diversity of opinion; but the young man set it forth with such convincing clearness and force, that the seniors concurred with him alike as to the cause and necessity, as well as to the probable success, of his proposed operation, the time for which was named, and, for the convenience of the patient, at the American House. Notwithstanding the courage and firmness of Edith and her mother, Field withheld from them the final arrangements, and permitted them to think that three or four days would intervene before the event would occur.

Of that time the Blagden mansion, on Lake Street, was one of the most imposing in the city, and the Blagdens were esteemed the favored of fortune, with as much claim to consideration as any family in the new communities.

A small but quite select party at their house had for several days been held in suspense, awaiting the anticipated arrival of the Grovers, and was announced for the second evening after their establishment at the American. As of their party, the young *Medico* was honored with a card, and accompanied them. The chief of the house, Mr. Grover, was still unequal to the fatigue of the party given in their honor, and it was understood that he was at liberty to retire early. The drawing-rooms were very brilliant, and the guests presented the most of what deemed itself exclusive. Many were branches and descendant of good New-England families, and brought to the Blagden rooms a little of the stately courtesy and formality of manner, of society life, of the old school, modified by the warmth and freedom of the new West,



less chilly than a similar assemblage in the parent community, and much less rude and sloppy than is the usage of the unmannered of to-day. Commerce, banking, and the professions were present by many cultivated representatives, among whom a little group of younger gentlemen, already widely known, of the Cleveland bar. Of these were Andrews, with a finely-cut, intellectual face, and elegant manners, sparkling and flashing with the keenest, happiest wit, which had no tinge of ill-nature, always born of the moment; and Starkweather, descendant of an old Huguenot strain of men, with dark, drooping face, and brilliant black eyes, full of bright thoughts, which bubbled out in happy expression, to be remembered and repeated by others, than whom Cleveland never held two more brilliant men. There were Kelleys and Paynes, Taylors, and many well-known names of that day, and many beautiful and dignified matrons, and a number of very lovely young ladies.

Edith was one to appear to peculiar advantage, surrounded by the beautiful of her own sex. Her loveliness never seemed so exalted, almost supreme, as when the imagination was kindled and helped by contrasts and comparisons. To-night she shone with a calm serenity, which added to the ordinary charm inseparable from her. She was quite as sincerely admired by women, as men, and always gracious to all. As she came from the dressing-room with her mother, she cast a quick glance at Dr. Field, and her observing mother knew that she was satisfied with the result. To him she appeared in a new sphere, serenely exalted, and unapproachable to admiration, and beyond the reach of the ordinary men about her. Though in no sense a society man, Dr. Field's culture, refinement, and fine sense, joined with a person of rare advantages and address, rendered him quite equal to the



occasion. Mr. Grover was known. His recent illness had been much discussed, and its fortunate issue attributed entirely to the skill of his young physician. The condition of Walter was also well known to all the friends of the family; and it was already noised about that young Field had detected the cause of this misfortune, and was now in Cleveland for the purpose of removing it by what was popularly regarded as a bold effort of his undoubted skill in surgery. The case of the Wilkins boy had made his name known in Cleveland. The youth was at once quite a lion. Men sought his acquaintance. Ladies were proud of having him presented to them; and his bearing and conversation deepened the favorable impression his reputation and person made, and smiles and admiration attended him throughout the evening, not at all lost on his observing friends, the Grovers. Mr. Grover retired early, and carried off his wife. Edith was quite equal to the care of herself, and Dr. Field would attend her back to the American. In the circle gathered at the Blagdens, dancing was only tolerated, was hardly favored, and was indulged in by the younger ladies and gentlemen present. Mr. Severton had no religious scruples on the subject, but looked down upon it from very high ground, with a distant contempt, only softened by compassion for the weakness of those who were partial to it. Among these was Miss Grover, of whom he was the professed and supposed favored admirer, and to whom, for the evening, he attached himself with meritorious devotion. So self-sacrificing was he, that he became her partner for the first set. It had to be admitted that he was not a graceful dancer, and appeared to a marked disadvantage in the same quadrille with Dr. Field, who had a little weakness for quadrilles and fancy dances, and was quite accomplished in the art, favored as he was by the very pretty



Miss Blagden, who made no secret of her admiration for him.

The company assembled at seven, and repaired to the supper-room at ten, which was then fashionably late. On the return to the drawing-rooms, Field found himself curiously drawn to observing Severton and Edith, and remembered that they had been a good deal together under his eyes that evening; and he then, for the first time, recalled what Ingles had said about them on that memorable night, when his ear was taken by the earnest words of a lady just before him, to her lady-friend.

“It must be so. You may rest assured that no young lady looks up that way into the face of a young gentleman without seeing her world in his eyes,” and he saw her eyes were on Edith and Severton.

“Oh! it is quite a decided thing,” responded her companion, — “quite decided. I have it on good — the best authority. The affair will come off some time the next season.”

It was a curious coincidence that just at that moment a spasm of pain marked and blanched the young doctor’s face; and the voice went on, —

“Well, they will make a fine-looking couple. He is not quite tall enough for her, and his face is narrow; but he has an intellectual expression and aristocratic cast of features.”

“I don’t think he is to be compared, for looks and style, with this young Dr. Field. Did you see them when they entered the room? I declare they made a sensation, and seemed just made for each other,” was the response.

“He comes too late,” said the other.

“Well, I don’t care, if he restores that idiot” —

The young man, at the first mention of his name, looked for means of escape. One was at this instant



opened to him, and he moved quietly away. On turning, his face was thrown back to him from a mirror, and he started at its pallor. A minute later, Edith crossed the room, and asked him if he was ill. He forced a smile, and thanked her for her kind interest. She soon inquired the time, and when she found it was eleven o'clock she proposed to return home.

In the carriage she said with some earnestness, "Dr. Field, I really hope you are not vain. You must be very glad and very grateful for your talents and skill. I should be so sorry to think that you had some man's vanity about personal looks."

"Why?" very much surprised.

"Because. What are mere good looks to a man of genius and all that? Genius can beautify deformity in a man."

"I would willingly change my nature for your good opinion, Miss Grover; and I should feel mortified beyond expression if I have exhibited the weakness you speak of."

His absolute sincerity excluded all idea that he intended a compliment.

"So many things have been said of you to-night," she added gravely.

Did she throw this out as a lure to see if he would ask what the things were, and who said them? Whatever was the motive, he did not inquire. He may have been warned by her first words.

"And then, at one time," she resumed, "you seemed quite taken with Miss Blagden, as you should be. She is one of the loveliest and sweetest girls I ever knew."

"Taken by her, I think would be more accurate, Miss Grover," laughingly.

"Or taken both together," was her correction. "If, when a young gentleman meets a young lady, the thought



occurs to him, 'What kind of a wife will she make?' you must have found a satisfactory answer in her case."

"I think her a very lovely girl. I really did not think of that. I never should. What could a fellow like me offer to one like her?"

"She is a true woman. A true man might well afford to let her judge of that."

Then followed lively words about the persons, the young ladies whom they met; and Edith, in the generosity of her heart, was charmed with the delicacy and frank admiration with which he spoke of them.

As they were about to part for the night, she asked him with grave earnestness, "When will this — dear Walter's case be attempted? Oh, how I wish it was all over!"

"Please do not insist on knowing. Do me this one favor," plaintively. "Why would you know?"

"Because I shall at that time make special intercession with Heaven, as on that night. I shall never forget that, nor the blessed dawn," raising her eyes to his.

"Nor shall I. If in any thing I deserve consideration, don't press me further, I pray. Dismiss this from your mind as far as you may; and some day you will come in from the street, and find your brother with his eyes bright and clear, with a fillet about his head, and wonder that you were ever anxious about it."

"You will do it yourself, — say that you will? Should it not be? Heaven will direct your hand. Promise me this," entreatingly.

"Anybody can do it," smiling.

"And you can do it best. Am I — are we not to have this assurance? We shall pray with more faith and fervor."

"And what shall be done for the fathers and boys who have no such mothers, wives, and sisters to pray for them?"



“Two women will alway pray that you may ever have guidance,” with fervor, dropping her eyes.

“Thank you, thank you! I will remember that, when I most need it, alway,” with emotion.

She still lingered. “Must I go without your promise?”

“I will assuredly do it.”

“Good-night, Dr. Field,” very sweetly.

“Good-night, Miss Grover.” His voice had a tone of sadness, and his eye followed her form down the corridor. As she turned into her room, he caught a gleam of her face. Did she cast a glance back toward him? He was uncertain. I think she did.



## CHAPTER IX.

TELLS WHAT FURTHER HAPPENED IN CLEVELAND, AND HOW DR. FIELD KISSED WALTER'S LIPS, AND OTHER MATTERS OF INTEREST.

THE next was a sparkling winter morning. Mrs. Grover and Edith had some shopping engagements, made the night before, and availed themselves of the day which they were sure would intervene before Walter would pass under the hands of Dr. Field, whose final assurance to Edith had given them much comfort, almost rest. Very brightly they met him at the breakfast-table, and observed a little unusual pallor and languor on his face and about his eyes, which, Mrs. Grover saw, yielded at once under the words and smiles of Edith, about which she had some very pleasant thoughts.

In that time, shopping was limited to the north side of Superior Street, between Seneca and Water, two blocks, on which space, however, were many large, well-appointed establishments, supplied with extensive and choice varieties of goods. The ladies had chosen the morning as a time when they would be less crowded, and the enterprise was one mainly of serious business. Besides, they wanted the afternoon for other purposes.

Edith went forth in the crisp, winter air, in fine spirits, and with an unwonted glow on her face. More than once her mother turned her eyes to her, with the thought that something had occurred, had been said to her, which imparted unusual pleasure. She would have connected



it with Dr. Field ; but his rather distant air precluded that association, as it precluded the idea that there was mutual pleasure ; then she recalled how quickly he lit up under her smile, and she was puzzled about it. But they plunged into Roosevelt & Co.'s Bazaar with their friends, and momentarily these two were lost from her mind. But Edith, for some reason, fell or passed out of her bright mood, and became absent, pre-occupied ; ran her eyes over goods without noting their colors, and passed her fingers over them, unconscious of their texture and fabric ; spoke at random, then a little excitedly, and finally relapsed into silence, without making any purchases on her own account, saying that she had to see things twice, that colors at first confused her, which not a little surprised her mother, who fell into something of her mood, and they returned to the American much earlier than had been anticipated. Something Edith had heard that Walter would be further examined that morning, and he and the possibilities of his case were palpably with her all the forenoon. Upon gaining the floor of their apartments, she left her mother, ran forward, and discovered some unusual appearances about the door of Walter's room, in which always slept one attendant. Something came suddenly to her that the critical moment had arrived, and her steps were arrested. Just at that instant, Dr. Field stepped to the door, saw, and approached her. His face was prophetic, or, rather, it expressed the fulfilment of prophecy.

“ O doctor ! ” was all she could say, quite in a tremor.

“ Forgive — forgive me, if I misled you as to the time, ” he said, taking her hand, and turning her back towards the parlor. “ I deceived you in nothing else. Thank God ! it is all over, and your dearest wish is fulfilled. ”

“ Thank and bless God ! ” cried the relieved and grate-



ful girl, bursting into happy tears ; “ and, next to God, thank and bless you,” covering her face with her hands an instant, as she sank upon a sofa. “ May I go to him ? ” starting up a moment later.

“ In a few minutes. He will soon recover. You shall see him soon.”

“ Dr. Field, it was your hand ? ” detaining him.

“ That was the decision. I had given you my word. I would have been spared. *He seemed so like you !* But I remembered what you said last night. It was not difficult. Every thing was as we expected. His restoration will be perfect,” and the young man left her.

“ He seemed so like you ” lingered in the maiden’s mind amid the whirl of sensations which agitated her.

Her mother was detained a moment by an acquaintance, and entered the parlor just as Dr. Winslow and two or three medical friends came in by another door, radiant and flushed from the common enterprise. He immediately capered up to Edith, grasped her hands with warmth, and rushed off to her bewildered mother, whom he caught as if he would embrace her.

“ I congratulate you ! I congratulate ourselves — everybody ! ” he cried a little wildly.

“ Mother,” cried the now recovered Edith, going to her mother, “ it is Walter. They have — it is through — all over, and most successful. Dr. Field has just told me. It is all right, all blessed.”

Then followed a clamor of voices as Mr. Grover and others came in. After a little, Mrs. Grover fully comprehended what had happened, and her first rush of emotion was in tears. Her first inquiry was for Dr. Field.

“ He is with his patient,” said her husband, scarcely able to command himself. “ You shall see them both soon, my dear.”



“Only think!” she said, “and I never even suspected it! I thought it would not happen for three or four days, and it is all over! How glad I am!”

Then more clamor of voices.

And then Dr. Winslow broke into an exaggerated encomium of the absent young surgeon, and wound up with, “Just one instant’s pause when all was ready, as if to be certain of himself, and one deep, long, quivering breath of relief when it was done. Nothing was ever more beautiful or more perfect. And then he bent over and kissed the dear boy’s lips where he lay. Never was there such a thing seen before—never!” And his voice was quite lost with emotion.

“I confess,” said Dr. Withers, a frosty veteran, “while that was what we call unprofessional, it brought the tears from my eyes, and I could have kissed him for doing it.”

Dr. Winslow turned, took Edith’s two hands, and looked her in the eyes in such a way as to bring the warm, ingenuous color to cheek and lip. “I think he did well to leave that to other lips,” he said seriously, dropping her hands.

Half an hour later, mother and sister were admitted to the bedside of the restored child, whom they found very quiet, with a clear light in his eyes. They also found two young medical gentlemen in the room. Mrs. Grover kissed and shed tears over Walter, and overwhelmed Dr. Field with thanks and blessings. He explained that one or both of these would remain in constant attendance for the present, and that Dr. Winslow would have charge of the case. Much more he added, and as if taking final leave of the case. His words were very cheerful, and full of confidence; but to Edith’s ear there was in them a tone of sadness. To her it expressed something like regret, as if now the last thing was done. They had no further



need of him, and there was no excuse for his lingering. Not till two hours later did this interpretation of her own sensations fully occur to her.

After an absence of that time, he came hurriedly into the room where all the family were, and to their great surprise, and spite of their earnest protests, took a hasty leave of them. It was in vain that they remonstrated and expostulated, and Edith insisted that his presence was necessary to both Walter and her father.

“You very much overestimate my importance in this whole matter,” he answered a little coldly. “You have a college of M.D.’s here, all interested in the case, and a city full of doctors. There are many waiting for me in the cheerless woods, sick, without father or mother, brother or sister, — nobody but me. I must go to them. Besides,” with a little sparkle that sometimes lit his face with gayety, “they are all I have. If I remain away too long, they might get well.”

He had a promise of daily reports of Walter’s case, when he shook Mr. and Mrs. Grover’s hands warmly, bowed profoundly but silently to Edith, and bent over Walter with, —

“My precious, glorious Walter! I have now a right to love you,” touched the boy’s lips with his own, and went out.

“He kissed me,” cried the greatly pleased boy, — “he kissed me. Didn’t you see him, Edith?”

Without an answer, his sister walked hastily to a window in silence.

That evening the “Herald” and “Plain-Dealer” had extended reports and notices of the case, with encomiums of the skill of the young surgeon. All the afternoon and evening, friends and callers were coming with inquiries, and going away with reports more or less exaggerated, until



the town was full of the name and exploits of the young physician. An incision of the cranium, and the removal of a small bit of its substance, was an operation that appealed to the popular imagination with great force, however small the real merit involved; while there was much in the skill and sagacity which led to the discovery of the child's misfortune which seemed to border on the marvellous. These, joined with the age of the physician, rendered him an object of very great interest.

When the excitement of the day and evening had subsided, after the retirement of Mr. Grover, mother and daughter sat long, talking over the events of the last two or three months, which had thrown Dr. Field into such important and peculiar relations to them personally. Something, as the reader knows, they had noticed in common, peculiar in his manner toward Edith, who would hardly admit that she was aware of it, and was reluctant to say any thing of that feature of his intercourse with them.

"To me," said the mother, "his manner to you is that of one who feels himself very strongly drawn to you, as is very natural, but who also feels or fancies that you are, for some reason, beyond his reach; and this, I think, is your father's idea also."

"More like that of a considerate young man who has no such inclination, and fears that the young woman may be too susceptible," replied the young lady with a smile.

"Edith," exclaimed the mother in surprise, "you do not think any such thing! In your heart and soul you know better."

The head of the maiden went down under her mother's words; and in her soul she heard him saying, "He seemed so like you." With humid eyes she kissed her mother good-night. She went again to Walter's bedside, stood



regarding the sleeping boy for a moment, bent over him in murmured prayer, and kissed the lips *his* had pressed, and, with the bashful lids coyly veiling the conscious light of her eyes, she passed to her own room.



## CHAPTER X.

CONTAINS AN ACCOUNT OF DR. FIELD'S RETURN TO THE CORNERS, AND OF VARIOUS THINGS WHICH HE DID, AND OF SOME WHICH HAPPENED TO HIM AND OTHERS.

THE young man took his seat by the driver in the sleigh which was to convey him, drew the robes about him, and without a glance up at the tall American House, with his head a little drooping, was driven rapidly out of the city on his way back. His advent in Cleveland was an episode. Indeed, he looked upon his life for the past six months as nothing else, so unlike what he had planned had it been. He endeavored to turn his mind from the Grovers; but it would dwell on the incidents of his intercourse with them, from the ride in the stage with Edith to his parting with them a few minutes ago. I will only speculate as to the probable course of his thoughts. It will be safe to say that Edith was rarely long absent from them, and he may not yet have fully forgotten her manner on that first meeting. Sure I am, too, that she had become for him the one woman in all the world; and he now probably realized to himself how impossible she was to him, strange as that may seem. I am quite sure, also, that he now looked upon his intimate relations with the Grovers as at an end. He very much under-estimated his services to them; nor, beyond the great satisfaction of relieving Walter, did he take much credit to himself for skill in that case. He looked upon himself as in a way forced upon the Grovers, how much against their wish he could



guess by the manner of Edith toward him at their first meeting. The exigency was passed ; and, ingenuous as he was by nature, it seemed to him now, that he should retire from all seeming claim upon their favor or friendship, and leave them unembarrassed from any pretence of claim upon them. His relation to them was purely a professional business matter, and must stand on that ground alone. That there was now no excuse for continuing his intimacy with them was clear to him. They were more than kind to him, and it was in the nature of such persons to be this to any one under the same circumstances. He was too proud and sensitive to avail himself of this kindness, forced from them, in a way, by the hand of affliction. He doubtless felt that Edith was altogether too dangerous to his peace, — he a young country doctor, with but his saddle-bags, “a peddler of pills.” He was separated from her now for the winter ; and by the time of her return he would be fully schooled to the thought that she was the destined wife of another, certainly was never to be his.

Then he did not quite like Mr. Grover. He could tolerate and make allowances for the first days of convalescence ; but the imperious way in which he would absorb his own life and labors, and draw them to his narrow, selfish comfort and convenience, was repulsive to the young man’s notions, and may have wounded his self-love. He felt that the regard of Mrs. Grover for him was warm and genuine, and he did not intend wholly to forego it, but would enjoy it sparingly. The thought of playing upon it for any purpose could never enter his mind. She was a woman, a friend of his mother, to be loved, served, and revered, not to be used. Edith — she had merely elected him as a physician, and might never need him. It was in part because he felt that his love could not run and thrive in the most natural channels where it would



run, that he unconsciously took Walter into the depths of his regard with much of the warmth and devotion which women only usually inspire in the hearts of men. He was a refuge, where his wealth of love and tenderness might find sanctuary, and no one would question his right. He doubtless felt that he had materially contributed to his life, had rendered that life a blessing, and had a sense of proprietorship in him. One thing about it, save in a vague way, nothing had been said between Mr. Grover and himself of money or pecuniary compensation, and, so far as he was concerned, there never would be. The idea of taking money from them, of being paid off in full, for the vigils in which Edith had shared, was exquisitely repulsive. To present a bill and have it receipted, settled—well, he had never made an entry in any book, and never should. Indeed, book-keeping was not his strong point. He was quite aware that he had commenced his professional career with little reference to business principles of any kind, for which he intended to feel regret hereafter, and, so far as money was concerned, was in a bad way. He owed for his board, for his horse and its keeping, and a good many owed him; and that was the way of it. That was the time when everybody owed everybody else, and few paid anybody, save in the raw produce of the country. Yet just how he should manage to have his debtors cancel the demands of his creditors was a problem which was dismissed as insolvable as often as it came up.

Some two hours took him south-easterly to the Chagrin River, and out of that world of warmth and color, of which he was a centre, in the city. Before him lay the river under its wintry armor, and the wooded hills, covered with snow, now darkening under the black plumes of down-coming night. The atmosphere had been softening; and there was the ominous silence and deepening spell of



an approaching thaw, — that process of mystery in the economy of nature, the oncoming of which in mid winter steals on the consciousness of men before the signs are apparent to the eye. Beyond the melancholy hills was all the home and home-life known to the solitary youth. Through all this now-sinking snow lay the highways and byways, the battles of his daily life, ministering as he could to the ague and fever-stricken inmates of the scattered huts, cabins, hovels, and homes of the settlers of a region then more populous than now. He shuddered as he thought of the sordid Corners, and felt for a moment that the enthusiasm of his nature was lying almost dead and cold within him. Night was in his large melancholy eyes, and setting his lips in uncomplaining firmness, as Edith and her atmosphere of warmth, beauty, and color flashed on and filled his soul for one moment; and the next he faced the cold, empty, real life before him unshrinkingly.

Nothing in the world was farther from the young man's heart than setting himself up as a reformer of his fellows. An accident had placed him at the Corners. He had unknowingly become an object of active enmity. At once, in the arousing of the latent elements of his strong nature, his foes found a powerful re-action upon themselves. The vulgar stories about him, as he became known, died out rapidly. Men and women were drawn to him. He soon discovered all his surroundings, and lent himself, with the power of his rapidly-growing popularity and the enthusiasm of his nature, to the other needs of the people about him.

At his request Mr. Humphrey came over, late in the autumn, and preached at the Corners; and his earnest, hearty words of practical morality were not lost, and an arrangement was made by which he would continue his



labors there. A circuit-rider, one of the resolute self-devoted men of that day, was induced to include the Corners in his round. Dr. Field was also instrumental in securing the services of a young Wilder, an undergraduate of the infant Western Reserve College at Hudson, to teach a winter school at the Corners, and contributed materially to its organization and maintenance, upon a basis that appealed to the shrewd New-England people of the neighborhood, all of whom, within reach, patronized it without reference to district lines ; and it became from the start almost an institution.

Young Wilder was a man of vigorous mind, and became a great admirer of the young M.D. ; and the two, drawing to themselves all the young people of the better-to-do, became the ruling power. A singing-school was established ; and, later, something like a course of lectures was started, the young men contributing largely in this field, aided by clergymen and men of culture from the surrounding country. All these things, still in their infancy, in the dearth of intellectual or other attraction in that wide region, were rapidly making the Corners an important centre, where, for half of the evenings, something was going on which drew the most intelligent people for many miles together.

Some opposition was at the first attempted ; but the vigor of the new life and spirit was too great and hearty, and already the proprietor of the largest of the two taverns kept there, the headquarters of the most dangerous elements of the place, was negotiating a sale of the property to a well-to-do farmer of the neighborhood, which was soon after accomplished, and possession to be given on New Year's Day.

The other house was the residence, and held the office, of Dr. Field. From an alien element, regarded with dis-



like and apprehension, the young man became an attraction. His presence led to a change in some of the offensive features of the house ; and as he became known, and his fame extended, as that of a man may in a few weeks in a new country, the hotel changed to a resort of the better class who had occasion for a public-house. This winter it was the headquarters of the new departure, where the intelligent patrons of the school, the singing-classes, and the members of the lyceum, were constantly resorting, to the great improvement of the character of the place. While these important changes had their origin with young Field, and for which he had the credit, it must be said that he did not come to this labor like a young prophet, or an evangelist, born to a mission. The kindness of his nature, the activity of his sympathies, compelled him to observe his surroundings ; but his spirit was aroused, and he was called to action, by the enmity of a few, who regarded his presence at the Corners as a dangerous encroachment. Instead of a direct war on them, or contradicting their slanders of himself, he determined to create an influence that should render the Corners a less desirable residence for them.

As, in the empty silence of the evening, he now went back to all these things and to his former daily life, the cases of his different patients, one after another, passed in review through his mind ; and, when he stepped from the sleigh at the door of his hotel, he was quite prepared to take up the old burdens where he laid them down three days before, if not with quite the old enthusiasm, with all the old determination and self-abnegation which kindle to enthusiasm.

Wilder, the singing-master, and two or three friends, were awaiting his arrival, and received him with warmth. At the supper-table he gave them a lively picture of his



city experience, and then turned to the course of events at the Corners. It is possible that those who studied his face closely after his return may have observed a shade of gravity, bordering on sadness, not before perceptible.

The next morning, with Dick, whom he had broken to harness in a *limber-peter*, he went on the yielding snow, his old round of ministration among his patients. He met men with ox-teams hauling logs to mill; passed empty woodlands, where the choppers were busy felling trees, there regarded as man's principal enemies; by log-barns, from which came the measured beat of the thrashers' flails, now low and smothered, now loud and resonant; past the rude works of the boilers of black salt, enveloped in clouds of steam; meeting troops of bright-eyed boys, and ruddy-faced girls, on their way to school; seeing by the wayside men piling up huge heaps of logs near their cabins for fuel, men feeding young cattle with corn-stalks in remote fields, or chopping down maple, elm, and bass-wood trees, from which they would browse; hearing an occasional report of the deer-stalker's rifle in the depths of the forest; meeting boys with yokes of strong, half-wild steers, which, with many a shout and tussle, they were breaking to work in the snow; and here and there a man with a colt harnessed in a *limber-peter*, the runners of which were also the shafts, occasionally he met or passed a farmer with his wife and babies in a rough, snug box on an ox-sled, on their way to a store or going for a visit, encountering all the varieties of employment and pastime incident to winter life in that day of primitive customs.

A day or two later came the papers from Cleveland, with their inflated reports of Walter's case, and panegyrics of himself, which he ran his eye over, and, when spoken to about them, he dismissed the matter with few



words. Two days later the postmaster handed him two letters, post-marked Cleveland, addressed in hands unknown to him, — one, apparently, in the writing of a woman, firm, neat, and, he thought, very beautiful. This he almost crushed in his hand while he first opened the other, which, to his surprise, contained a certificate of deposit of the Merchants Bank for a thousand dollars; and his astonishment was not diminished by the other contents of the letter, which ran as follows: —

CLEVELAND, Dec. 20, 1839.

DR. FIELD. *My dear Sir*, — Enclosed find deposit to your credit in Merchants Bank for one thousand dollars. Edwards has orders to supply you with any money you may need, without calling on this, to the amount of five hundred dollars.

Don't trouble yourself with making out a bill for charges, leave money matters to me. The first instalment only is now mentioned. We hope other ways of evincing our sense of obligation to you may be found more grateful to your feelings.

I am unable to command my hand for more than a business note.

Edith has written for us.

Most sincerely yours,

W. W. GROVER.

The delicacy, consideration, and generosity of this letter, were fully appreciated by the young man, and may have had some effect on his estimate of the writer. Then he contemplated the certificate of deposits, \$1,000 and \$500, — \$1,500: that was wealth. No amount as due him from Mr. Grover had ever even floated in his fancy. This was extravagant overpay. He could not accept it.

Then he turned to the other letter, which had all the time throbbed under his hand. There it was, "Philip Field, M.D.," in the exquisite hand of Edith. She had actually written his name. A mist floated before his eyes. Poor youth! Here was his sore ordeal. He could not



avoid it. Would he be strong enough to escape wreck in its passage? Perhaps it may consecrate him more entirely to his mission. He walked about his room, with it lying on his table, which he approached two or three times, and turned away from it again, then turned, took it up, and opened it with a firm hand, and paused to admire the strong, firm flowing characters, full of grace and a certain regular irregularity which made it quite picturesque. He turned over to the signature "Edith." Below that was a P.S. with "E. G." The date was the same of her father's, and he read as follows:—

DR. PHILIP FIELD. *Dear Sir,*—As you will see by father's note, he is unequal to an extended letter, and mother has given up writing, and I become their scribe. They know that you will mainly wish to hear from Walter. He is doing as well as we could hope or wish,—is rapidly recovering, with no signs of inflammation. You will rejoice to know that his mental indications are most hopeful. Mother repeatedly exclaims, "Walter fully restored, body and mind, to grow up to manhood! How can we ever sufficiently praise and thank God! How can we ever reward Dr. Field! What a wonder of skill and Providence it all is!" In all this my father cordially unites. They expect to die your debtors. They know that your best reward cannot come from others.

Walter is quite conscious of the great change in himself, and will in time comprehend, as well as man may, what he owes to you. He remembers your parting with him, and you will be prepared for an ardent demonstration when he meets you.

[The young man paused, and ran his eye over the preceding, and saw that the subject was changed without a word of the writer's own. With a long breath he resumed.]

They—my father and mother—have not yet ceased to wonder over and regret your sudden departure. Mother thinks you had earned a right to a few days of leisure; and both wanted you should remain, and enjoy the fame you have won. They ask me to inscribe to you some of the very just things, as they call them, and which



are very flattering, that have been said of you, which I have respectfully declined to do. ["Of course," he said, "it might inflame the vanity she credits me with: she did quite right."] Dr. Winslow is very attentive, and the gentlemen you left in charge fully sustain your assurances of them. They, too, share in the admiration of a certain young surgeon.

Father misses you greatly. Says your presence was a tonic, and that he shall never fully recover until restored to your care.

Mother wishes me to say that whatever is needed for any of the poor of your patients you must freely call for. Edwards and Ingles have orders to supply all your requisitions, where, as you know, every thing is at your command.

She has also charged me with many compliments to you from several young ladies, which will be delivered on request. ["Ah!"] She also directs me to say that Mr. Humphrey has been here and spent a night with us, and he gave a glowing account of the works of grace performed by your hand at the Corners. Father expressed much incredulity upon the subject, and will expect some account of it from you, for which they will know what allowance to make. ["Of course."]

I am also instructed to say that they shall ask your acceptance of a little package for the holidays, also to urge you to come to Cleveland for New Year's, and they unite in the sincerest wishes for your constant welfare.

Mother will expect an answer to this.

I am responsible only for translating the wants, wishes, and words of my father and mother into written messages to you, and regret that my labor has not been better performed.

Walter sends love, and threatens to send a stick of candy for Christmas.

EDITH.

P.S. — A ball at the American by the *élite* of Cleveland will be the event of New Year's. I am requested to say that a formal invitation will be forwarded to you, and many hope you will attend.

E. G.

The young man went carefully over with it all again, and then dropped his head on his hand, sat for several moments in silent contemplation of it. It was the hand of Edith, transcribing the sentiments and wishes of her parents in guarded language, carefully repeating the au-



thority for each statement, with no whisper of a thought, wish, or word of her own, not even joining in their wish for his welfare. She sent Walter's love, but no intimation that she even remembered him. Of course this was by the most careful design, and which he would, in his sensitive frame of mind, be very likely to misinterpret against himself.

It is true there was one opening: he might ask her for the words of the young ladies spoken of himself.

As he construed the letter, he was not even to address a reply to the writer of it. Of course she knew he would answer it. The answer must be addressed to her mother. He was very glad to hear from Walter; and by the same mail he received a note from Dr. Winslow.

The first mail west bore the following answers:—

To Mr. Grover he wrote, —

DEAR SIR, — Your kind and generous letter, with enclosure, is just received. You greatly overestimate my services, and must permit me to avoid the humiliation of receiving a gratuity under the form of a compensation. I beg to return the certificate of deposit, but will thankfully avail myself of the offer through Mr. Edwards. I assure you that I fully appreciate the delicacy and generosity of your sentiments toward me, and I must beg to conduct myself so as not to forfeit your present high opinion of me. With the profoundest respect and esteem,

Yours,

PHILIP FIELD.

To Mrs. Grover: —

MY DEAR MADAM, — Your very kind letter, by the hand of Miss Grover, was received this evening. Its warmth touches and quite overcomes me. I regard this securing your esteem one of the few fortunate events of my life, and only hope not to forfeit it. Yours was the first word I received of the hopeful progress of Walter's case, and is exceedingly grateful to me. I can foresee no reason why your dearest wishes may not be fulfilled in reference to him. You are kind enough to estimate my services in his case by your hopes of the benefits which may flow from them. Praises



not justly my due, gratitude which I have not earned, are oppressive to me, notwithstanding any vanity I may possess. To have gained your esteem, to have perhaps earned a right to love and care for Walter, are to a solitary heart great acquisitions.

While I am jealous of receiving favors, I shall gratefully accept any thing at your hands in the spirit in which it will be offered. For my poor patients I shall gladly avail myself of your great kindness to them, and for them thank you in advance.

Mr. Humphrey is very sanguine, and not only overestimates what has really been done here, but gives me credit for the united labors of all, and many have contributed to the small results already produced. Quite as much is due to him as to anybody. The movement was spontaneous, whoever gave it direction.

I would be greatly pleased to meet you again in Cleveland, but may not hope to this winter.

Express my thanks to Miss Grover for the kind manner in which she transmitted your sentiments and wishes to me. I quite appreciate the spirit in which she rendered that service. I am sure she would meet a request which would spring from a vanity she was kind enough to deprecate, and which I will not ask her to believe does not exist.

Give my tenderest regards to Walter, and accept my most grateful acknowledgments to yourself.

Sincerely and gratefully yours,

PHILIP FIELD.

I would much like to know what Edith thought of that letter, which of course she saw. It is quite probable, that, in saying nothing as coming from herself in the letter she wrote, she only acted with that maidenly reserve which would prevent a high-spirited girl from doing any thing that would look like opening a correspondence with a young gentleman to whom her relations were so peculiar. It is possible that the offer to give him the flattering things said of him to her was an ingenious hint that he might write to her if he would, or it may have been a pleasant device to snare any little young man's vanity, which most men have, or both. Whatever it was, the youth coldly



passed the opening, and permitted her to see that he understood her guarded reserve, though he may have misapprehended its true source.

I do not know the springs of thought and emotion in a young woman's heart; but I have little doubt that they sometimes expose proud and sensitive men to much real suffering, and themselves to grave misapprehension and unhappiness, with no shadow of thought that the cause was with them.

One would think that he could guess what such a girl as Edith has shown herself to be would think of such a man as Dr. Field; but it would be the most hazardous thing to do. Whatever it was, the young man will be as likely to misapprehend her as to judge her with sagacity; and, if he blunders, she will doubtless leave him to correct his mistake as he may. I think it quite certain she will do little to help any man in his wooing, sure as I am she is too proud and direct to hide her heart from the man she would favor, if she was certain that he was seeking it. I do not think the young M.D. has the slightest intention of going in such a pursuit, as it is quite clear to him that it would be useless. I can only narrate what hereafter occurs between them; and, as both are somewhat exceptional, both will be likely to think and act quite unlike ordinary people.



## CHAPTER XI.

TELLS OF AN OLD-TIME SLEIGH-RIDE FROM CLEVELAND, AND HOW DR. FIELD PLAYED HOST AT THE GROVER HOUSE, WHAT HE SAW IN THE LIBRARY, AND WHAT WAS SAID AND DONE THERE.

BETWEEN Christmas and New Year a box addressed to Dr. Field was delivered to him by Edwards, with the compliments of Mrs. Grover. In his sanctum the young man opened it, and found a set of gentleman's seal furs — cap, muffler, and gauntlet gloves — of the finest quality, a lot of handkerchiefs, and many things such as a fond mother would bestow upon a son, among them an elegant pair of black velvet slippers wrought with golden acorns, such as might have come from the hand of Edith; but that they did or could never crossed the mind of the young M.D., who wondered sufficiently over them, as it was. The cap, gloves, and muffler were tried on, and applied to their proper use; but these slippers — he tried them on his hands, and held them up in all lights, but never more than glanced from them to his large, well-fashioned feet, and possibly may have wondered that any one could be so visionary as to suppose he would try to wear them. In his letter of acknowledgment and thanks to Mrs. Grover he was less happy in his reference to them than to either of the other articles.

New Year came, and then the deferred thaw, with bottomless mud, — March in January, — followed by an Arctic wave, only this was long before the invention of



that boreal name. Toward February came a fearful snow-storm, which, when the highways were opened out, restored communication.

Bulletins continued to announce the rapid recovery of Walter, while his father remained stationary. That winter through all Northern Ohio was long remembered for pulmonary-pneumonia, then popularly called lung-fever; and Field was hardly out of the saddle till the snow enabled him to drive a sleigh, after the beating-out of the roads.

Soon after this improved condition of the highways, came a note that Miss Grover and a party of ladies and gentlemen from Cleveland would visit the Grover homestead; and Field was invited to meet them, and devote as much time to them as his engagements would permit. Then later came Edwards, with a note from Mr. Grover, requesting that Dr. Field would be at the Grover house, receive the guests, and take on himself the office of host, and give them as much of his time during their stay as possible. The request, though novel, was natural under all the circumstances, and was in some respects a little embarrassing. The party would consist of ten or twelve. There seemed no choice but to accept the responsibility. Poor Edwards was in consternation, and Field promised to be on hand the next day before dinner, when their arrival was expected. By great activity he made his round, and was at his post in advance of the time. He found the preparations ample, and the winter garrison in a state of high excitement and trepidation. Ingles was nervous, and more sloppy than usual. Though quite accustomed, in her subordinate capacity, to city company, it was in the presence of the master and mistress. Now she was a sort of head housekeeper, and the expected guests of the highest, mightiest, of the city aristocracy.



“Every one on ’em the biggest bug in the city, Dr. Fields,” she said to him, wonderfully relieved, when she knew he was to be her chief.

“Yes,” he replied, “each of them much larger than all the rest put together, Ingles.”

“Jes so, doctor, an’ a raft on ’em too. Edith will take keer o’ the gals — one kin get on with them anyhow. But what on airth to do with the fellers, is the skimpy part on’t.”

“Well, you and I will manage the ‘fellers,’ — all but this high and mighty Severton. I don’t feel so certain about him,” laughingly answered Field.

“Never you mind about him. He’s about the peak-edest-faced chap ever you seen. Edith’ll see what’s what. Don’t you feel oneasy ’bout him, doctor.”

The sound of approaching sleigh-bells cut off further consultation, as two capacious, gayly-trapped sleighs, each drawn by four richly-caparisoned horses tricked out with every variety of bells, came sweeping up the well-beaten track, and swung around, with a smack of the driver’s whip, to the main entrance. It was as gallant a party as that olden time could have anywhere produced, East or West. The young ladies, rich in color, with flashing merry eyes, and ripples of laughter; the young men full of the warm blood and high spirit of youth, exhilarated by the crisp air, and inspired by the companionship of so many beautiful girls, were necessarily in a state of high fermentation.

Dr. Field stood uncovered to receive them. Edith was in the foremost carriage, to whom he devoted his first attention. The party was conducted to a spacious reception-room, warmed with a roaring wood-fire, where, amid peals of laughter and gay banter, wraps, furs, cloaks, and overcoats were laid aside, and the wearers gathered about



the wide-formed fireplace. Here Edith introduced such of the company as Field had not met to the gracious host, who, as if to relieve her from any possible embarrassment in the position in which they found him in her father's house, said to them that he was especially commissioned by Mr. Grover to occupy his place, to receive and welcome them, which, in the name of the absent master, he was happy to do, and did with the greatest pleasure. The words came impromptu, and were rather well said.

"You see," said Edith, "that Mr. Edwards is so good as to be quite stupid."

"While some of us are merely stupid, and from no excess of goodness," added Dr. Field laughingly.

"Why, doctor, we are told that your righteousness has already saved a city over here: so said Mr. Grover," cried the vivacious Miss Blagden, who had met him with much warmth.

"Mr. Grover has not fully recovered his mental vigor, I see," he answered. "A city saved by such means could not have been in great peril; and I am not in the least danger of the fatal love of the gods, I assure you, Miss Blagden."

"You are to be congratulated, doctor," said young Collins, a promising young lawyer. "If you have survived the Corners, you need have no fear of Olympus."

Then Edwards and Ingles brought in some mugs with hot slings, which were imbibed with appreciative vivacity, when the guests, with their satchels and valises, were shown to their rooms.

An hour later the gay party were in the drawing-room, paired by the ready hostess for the dining-room. Whether out of compliment to the profession, or otherwise, she selected the grave and always a little elderly youth, Dr. Williams, as her own escort, and assigned Dr. Field to



Miss Blagden, her especial friend. As they stood grouped about in twos, awaiting the signal for dinner : —

“I fully appreciate,” said the young host, “the kind Providence which limited the gentlemen of this party to six, while there are seven ladies. Thirteen, notwithstanding that odd superstition, brings fortune to some of us,” with a bow to Miss Blagden.

“Miss Grover is aware that every twelve contains a Judas,” said Wilson.

“Twelve men,” said Miss Grover readily.

“Miss Grover can have no fear of treason,” said the gallant Severton.

“I beg to know what reason or accident Dr. Field supposes decided the numbers,” asked Collins.

“One of the fairest in the world,” replied Field, with an innocent look at his partner. “How melancholy I should be marching in alone !”

“Really, Dr. Field, you are so very gallant, that it would be out of nature for me to complain. I shall not be found flying in the face of such a Providence,” responded the pleased Miss Blagden.

The doors were thrown apart, and Edith was conducted to the head of the table, Miss Blagden to a place opposite, with a lady on the left of the host, while it so happened that the watchful Severton secured the seat by the hostess.

It was not a dinner of courses, a thing rarely attempted in the West at that day, save on extraordinary occasions. The table had not been arranged under the eye of Edith or her mother, and had the bad taste of profusion, not at all a fault in the eyes of the guests after their long winter ride. The service was quite good, on the whole. In their graceful devotion to their duties, the young hostess and host were quite unaware of the whispered commendation they received. To several, their present position at the



Grover board seemed the most natural in the world. I wonder what Edith thought of it? Field—it never entered his head.

To Miss Blagden it became apparent that Mr. Severton was not of the number who admired this relation; and his devotion to the presiding lady attracted her attention, and finally provoked several remarks from her. She may have been willing to have an occasion to speak of him, in connection with her friend, to the doctor.

“How very devoted Mr. Severton is to the lady at the head of the table! and he evidently wishes it to be noticed,” she said.

To this no response from Dr. Field.

“Do see, doctor, what a self-satisfied expression his high, narrow face wears!” she whispered.

“A gentleman distinguished by the favor of Miss Grover may well feel complacent,” was his reply.

“Dr. Field! do you pretend to think that in her heart she favors him?” she asked very earnestly.

“Really, Miss Blagden, if you put it so seriously, I do not presume to speculate on the preferences of Miss Grover. I have no thoughts on that subject,” gravely.

“Really and truly? I think that is strange,” she answered, with pique in her voice and manner, emphasized with a look.

The long ride in the winter air imparted an appreciative relish to the viands; and notwithstanding that was the day of delicate feeding by young ladies, ample justice was done every thing but the dessert by all the guests.

After the party arose from the table, Dr. Field conducted the gentlemen to a smoking-room which communicated with the billiard-room; and then, with a hasty word to Edith, he excused himself, with an injunction to not wait for him at supper, and drove away for the afternoon.



The guests felt the usual lassitude following their exposure to the rigor of the day, ere the spirits were under the complete restoration of the frame to the wonted tone; and they were a little dull, not to say drowsy, and divided themselves into groups or pairs, of easy, lazy gossip, and lounged through the short intervening hours, till supper, at which Dr. Field did not appear. It was late when he came. He took his horse to the stable, and entered the house by a back-way, intending to pass through the library, and enter the drawing-room from the dining-room.

With his light, springy step smothered in the rich carpet, he had nearly reached the middle of the library ere he was aware that it was occupied. As he approached the angle, commanding much of the large room, he was arrested by a vision of Edith and Severton. She was seated, while he stood near, leaning toward her, speaking low and very earnestly. She sat with her eyes averted, and turned in the direction of Field's approach, and full of the expression spoken of by the ladies at the Blagden party. The man instinctively felt that he was on sacred ground, and hastily turned back. He knew he was discovered; for he had a glimpse of Edith suddenly rising to her feet upon seeing him. His wise course was then to have gone forward. He was not equal to it. He hastily regained the corridor, lingered a little, and then went directly forward, past the dining, to the usual door leading to the drawing-room. It was ajar, and he paused an instant as there came from it a gush of gay laughter. The old spasm passed, and he entered to meet a lively fusilade of buffets for his desertion and long absence. He found Miss Kelley in a mirthful despair at her failure to realize her conception of a pretty Spanish dance, neither a quadrille, contra-face, or waltz, though uniting something of all. He was quite familiar with it; and



when Edith entered the drawing-room, a minute or two after he did, she found him effectively aiding the baffled young lady in imparting the step and movement to the others. Both were simple and graceful, flowing and rhythmic, and when they were caught, which was readily done, the dance was quite an absorbing thing for many minutes, and was followed by two or three other dances.

Field became aware that he was observed by Edith. He felt, rather than saw, that her eyes were constantly upon him. His first thought was to apologize to her for his innocent intrusion in the library. His second was, that what a gentleman should not see he should alway seem to be ignorant of, and this consideration he acted on. The rule is doubtless a good one. Just at that time he did not care to speak to her. He was only a common weak mortal, after all. True, he had not had a word from her of Walter, her mother, or father, and felt a sort of bitter pleasure in avoiding her, and permitting her to see that he did. Why should she bring her lover here, and flaunt him under his eyes? steal away from her guests to hear his tale? But then why should she not? What could it be to him? She could never be any thing to him, or he to her, and he turned away from her.

After a little, his better nature prevailed. He wanted to hear from Walter, from her mother. There was a yearning to hear her voice, be near her, — a joy to feel that he had aided her, had done for her what no other one had been able to do. He knew all the time that her eyes were wistfully seeking his, that she had messages for him from her mother; and to refuse her an opportunity to deliver them was unmanly, and would expose him to suspicion on her part. Come what might, he felt that he had the stay of a pride as cold and as high as her own. His heart might break, but she should never dream of it. He



turned, and in that frank way which she had so often seen in his intercourse with others, but which never, save on two or three occasions, marked his bearing toward herself, went up to her.

“Miss Grover,” he said, “tell me all about Walter (I am sure you will spare me a moment for that), and about your mother.” There was just a something in his voice that a woman’s ear might thrill with.

“Spare you a moment! I have been waiting ever since your return. You fled from me in the library,” with a little emphasis and a smile, “and I followed you here.” They turned to a seat a little remote.

“He still wears his cap,” she said, speaking of her brother, “but is as full of life and spirit, — the healthy spirit of a light-hearted boy. His eyes are as bright, the heavy look has left his face, and to us he is a constant wonder and joy. O Dr. Field!” Her voice vibrated with a tremor, and her eyes fell an instant. “He is a bit of a tease,” she resumed in a subdued manner, as if putting herself under restraint, “and he asks *so* many, and *such* questions! — a boy of thirteen with the mind of five. And, do you know, mother is almost as much changed as he is. She has quite recovered her old elasticity of spirits and hopeful cheerfulness. You cannot — no one can — comprehend all that his restoration is to her; and she says that daily it grows upon her, constantly brightening and deepening. I am quite hopeful that she will fully recover all her old strength. She will build up with Walter.”

Nothing could have been better said than this; and her manner, while a little restrained, was very sweet. As she ceased, she looked into her companion’s eyes, as if she would have said more, and stopped only because she was a little embarrassed. The doctor seemed to expect some-



thing further, and sat in a moment's silence, under the spell of her voice.

"And your father, what of him?" he asked finally.

"Not so well as we could wish, and had a right to expect," she answered with less vivacity, and more subdued manner. "He says he shall never fully recover till he can be under your care," lifting her eyes, which had fallen, with frank ingenuousness to his. "Your presence is a tonic to him, Dr. Field."

"Which shows that he is in a bad way," he answered, smiling. "The truth is, Cleveland is a bad place for him in his present condition. The climate there would try a bronze statue, and I did not expect that he would much more than keep along as he was. If he could have gone South, or to Italy; but it was too late in the season. I think he had, by all means, better come home before the winter breaks up, and the lake opens. It is much more sheltered here, and he should not be exposed to those awful March winds. Another autumn he can go to Italy or St. Thomas."

"You will have to go with him," she said quite gravely.

"Next summer will bring him strength and healthier notions," he answered good-naturedly. And then, after a pause, "I somehow feel that I owe your mother an apology. If I only knew how to frame one," he said.

"Owe her an apology—for what of all things in the world?" she asked.

"For the very poor way I thanked her for her beautiful presents. I tried hard enough, but I can't put gratitude on paper. Only think, you have not the slightest conception what it is to a male wretch to find himself an object of interest and care to such a woman, so generous and tender. I really never so fully realized that I was so far out of the circle of"—He stopped suddenly.

"I am sure I shall say very foolish things," he added.



"I don't know, doctor: I am sure your words will be safe, and probably wise," she answered very sweetly.

"Thank you: I am sure you are very considerate." Then came silence. She seemed to expect he would resume, as he did not.

"Your words, doctor, open the way to a thing I want to say to you for Walter, about that stick of candy. He wants to make you a present, something to commemorate what you did for him. It must have intrinsic value, be of service to you, and"—

"O Miss Grover! More presents!"

"What would you have—what would you choose? You will not refuse him!"

"Some little thing, any thing,—a book, a knife, a stick,—something the value of which shall be that it was his gift, came from him. Think, Miss Grover—I can appeal to the abundant richness of your nature, I know—would you pay me, humiliate me with presents which in a way pay me off, and dismiss me?"

"Dr. Field! for Heaven's sake tell me what can we do for you?" with great warmth.

"Oh! this I suppose—Let it be as you will: it can matter nothing. I have no business with feelings, loves, or hates. They are luxuries. Friendship, love, can only be between the equally rich, or the wretchedly poor," with intense bitterness, dropping eyes and voice.

"Philip! What have I ever said or done, that"—

"What does he say about the slippers?" cried Miss Blagden, running toward them with *malapropos* vivacity. "I know about them: I hope they—My! what have I done?" struck by their strange looks and manners. "Oh, I didn't know! Edith—Dr. Field!" Edith looked at her in blank helplessness, her face blanched, her eyes dilated. Dr. Field had dashed himself headlong over the precipice,



and would have landed the Lord knows where. Miss Blagden's ludicrous intervention served as a sort of mental lasso, which brought him to his feet on the ground he had so recklessly left.

"The slippers?—good heavens, Miss Blagden!" he cried, laughing at the absurdity of her question, "they had quite slipped my memory, with many other things. I am extremely obliged to you for my recall. They are a dream of some slipper-maker to Cinderella's descendants. I never have tried to put them on."

"What have you done with them, pray?" at a loss what to say in the certainty that she had marred something which had deeply moved them.

"I hid them from mortal eyes. Years hence, when I'm a very old bachelor, with the thin hair combed carefully over the unprotected top of my soft head, I shall keep them under a glass, look at them, sigh, and dream—an old bachelor's dream—of the impossible," very gayly.

"Doctor, it would be much more sensible to dream a young bachelor's dream of the possible," she responded with recovered animation.

"He has no faith in a young man's dreams," said Edith, quite herself, compelled to say something. Then the others came rippling about them, and they had to arise, and mingle with their guests, and half an hour's *persiflage* followed.

When Field took leave for the night, it was with the understanding that he should send down a famous fiddler for the next evening, and come himself, with permission to bring his friend Wilder.

Among the excursionists the event of the next day was a drive about the country. They went to the Falls, and from there a turn around by the Corners to ———.



“ Surprise the doctor in his jungle,” Mr. Collins said.

They found there quite a pleasant country inn; and, covered and hidden by the snow as many of the uglier features of the place were, it was to the eyes of the visitors not an unattractive village. They were there about noon, and the streets were full of school-children, and there was quite a show of bright-eyed, romping country lasses, and some appearance of activity about the stores and shops. The advent of the visitors from the city, with their dashing teams and sleighs, the pealing clangor, and jingles of their “sweet bells out of tune,” the laughing, flashing-eyed young ladies, with their gallant attendants, were a sight never before seen at the Corners, and drew out the entire population. The party made a little call at the hotel, where Field had his quarters, and learned that he went off early that morning, and it was unknown when he would return. They then turned toward Mr. Grover’s, and went over the road on which Edith and Dr. Field journeyed in the stage six months before.

Her friend Miss Blagden noticed that the grave look which Edith’s face had worn since the night before was in no way dispelled on this ride home. I wonder if the memory of the thoughtful girl was on the occurrences of that ominous ride.

That evening, Wilder presented himself to the young mistress of the mansion alone. He explained the absence of Dr. Field, saying that he had been called away to meet Dr. Shepherd and Dr. Ludlow in a consultation in Mantua, many miles away, and would probably not return that night, as he did not. The abstraction of the young lady hostess was in no way dispelled, as her friend could see, notwithstanding her devotion to her guests. Nor was her countenance more luminous the next morning, when a



threatened change in the temperature compelled an early departure on the return of the party to Cleveland.

As they were about to leave, Edith received a hasty, verbal message from Dr. Field, of regret and excuse for his non-appearance. The messenger returned without reply, and the party drove away.



## CHAPTER XII.

TELLS HOW EDITH CAME TO TELL DR. FIELD THAT HE HAD BETTER GO INTO THE SUGAR-ROOM, ALSO WHAT HAPPENED ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THAT MEMORABLE RIDE IN THE STAGE.

TIME passed; and on the last days of February the Grovers returned to their homestead, and immediately sent a message to Dr. Field. When he came in, Walter, a bright, dashing boy, sprang upon him the moment he saw him. The young man put his arms about him, and kissed him as if he were a young sister, and then held him off, and looked at him with a tender admiration. His reception by the elders was quite that of a father and mother, very touching to the solitary heart of the young man. As to Edith, it was afterward remembered, that, while his greeting was cordial, he did not offer to take her hand, but then he may have been prevented by the effusive Walter.

Mr. Grover, while he had gained some strength, was subject to a constant mental depression, and, as Mrs. Grover thought, exhibited symptoms of hypochondria, needing judicious treatment medicinally and mentally. The even, ever-present, tender care of his wife had lost its potency, and Edith was almost without power, and the roistering spirits of the thoughtless Walter, a positive annoyance.

He wanted to get back to the care and companionship of Dr. Field. The first hour's intercourse between them



demonstrated to the two women that the tone of the young man's conversation, the rude audacity with which he brushed away the melancholy fancies and despondent megrims of the unstrung man, were precisely what were most needed. He wanted nothing so much as to be dealt with by a certain wholesome vigor of which no woman was capable, and which they now, for the first time, discovered was a part of the accomplishments of the young physician. Almost instantaneously the application of this mental medicament called up the latent powers of the patient, who responded to the challenge which the young man cast down to him. I am not certain that the restored presence of Edith did not furnish a large share of the young man's inspiration. He may have had the faculty of calling up the needed power at will, and now felt the demand for doing it. It may have been one of the happy seasons which fall to men endowed as he was; for, with even the spice of rudeness which he used, he was to the Grovers never so attractive. He reminded Edith of that memorable horseback excursion on that autumn day.

Fortunately he had much leisure on his hands; and for the next ten or fifteen days he devoted himself quite to the Grovers, and was very nearly on his old footing of intimacy, coming, staying, going, and coming back again, and the gains in strength and spirits, in real vigor and avoirdupois, by Mr. Grover during this short time, were a marvel; so that as the winter finally broke in, young March and spring obtained a firmer, warmer hold, he had won back the healthy tone of a man who found his feet firm on the earth, and was meditating a renewal of his grasp on the world and work of men.

As he thus gathered strength and confidence, Dr. Field withdrew, — seemed to recede as Mr. Grover advanced, until finally, as the chief resumed something of his old



habits and duties, the young man had quite vanished. During these days his manner toward Edith had been observed by both parents, — by the father with a puzzled wonder, by the mother with anxious concern, while the young lady herself seemed quite unaware of any thing peculiar in it. It was remarked, that, while he seemed cordial toward her, he seldom addressed any remark to her. He never inquired for her, if absent; and though apparently formed to appreciate ladies' society, and render himself acceptable to them, he never offered her any of the attentions which young gentlemen usually do, and which he might have known, in the solitude of the season and absence of society, would give her pleasure, and was a duty on his part. Mrs. Grover came to suspect that much of his vivacity and gay spirits was assumed; and she saw that at times he suddenly dropped to silence and abstraction, and she thought that she saw in his frank eyes, and about his mouth, the traces of depression and sad thoughts. She turned her attention to Edith, and saw signs of a change in her manner toward the young man. It was like that of one who felt that her presence gave him no pleasure, and who met him only as a favored friend of her parents, who merely tolerated her, and never extended to her the consideration due her as the daughter of the house, or to a young lady of her position, which, while she could not resent, compelled her to circumspection. In this way March ran on to April, when the visits of the young doctor became quite rare.

To Walter the young spring opened a new world, — a world which he entered with the dew of the first morning, glittering in the first sunshine. Strong and lithe, free and joyous, when permitted to escape from the lessons of his tutor, he leaped and ran, called and shouted, in the ecstasy of a freshly liberated soul, kindled with the sun-



shine and blue skies of spring, when spring came very real, in the beautiful maple and beech groves, the elm, ash, and basswood glades, the warm chestnut-oak and tulip-tree hillsides of Northern Ohio. On the Grover domain was a grand sugar-maple preserve of a hundred acres, with some thousands of those splendid trees standing thick on the beautiful slopes, descending southerly toward the river, in whose depths the high March sun lingered warm and lovingly, and where the soft breezes first came, whispering over the winter beds of the sleeping flowers. In the heart of the forest, nearly a mile from the house, were the sugar-works and appurtenances for making maple-sugar on a scale and with a completeness of method that rendered it quite famous all over the Reserve. This "sugar-camp" was a point of wide interest in that region, and had many visitors from a distance. As may be supposed, it was, in the season, a favorite resort of Walter; and the boy had made it many visits the present spring, and found unusually attractive squirrel and pigeon shooting in the woods. For some reason the sugar-camp had less charms for Edith than usual; and she resisted and evaded all the entreaties of Walter to have a day—one glorious time—at the sugar-house. On one of the recurring splendid days which marked the close of the season, she finally promised to go with him the next afternoon.

The next day came, more radiant than its predecessor, with a sky of marine blue, with just a vanishing of hazy smoke over the tree-tops, and the blue-birds calling down out of the azure depths, and the songs of the robins throbbing up from the earth. Innumerable pigeons were busy under the beech-trees, tearing up the bright leaves, and gorging the last autumn's nuts, stowed away in the dead foliage. Woodpeckers sent their cheery short-rolls



from the dead limbs of high-up trees; and the muffled drum of the partridge came like the fluttering beat of a frightened heart from the mysterious depths of a thicket.

Walter was in a state of exhilaration all the forenoon, and ran to the clock a score of times to hurry the tardy time. Edith was in a mood of languid unrest, — had been for days, — which she attributed to the season; not drooping, or pensive, but as if some deep chord had been touched, sending a vibration through the hidden seats of emotion. All the morning and forenoon she went about unemployed, with a flush on her cheek and a liquid light in her eyes, as if in some way her sensibilities made their existence felt. After an early dinner, the two set off on horseback, as some of the road was soft and spongy, — Walter with his gun and game-bag, and Edith in short skirts, to admit of walking in the woods. The day, itself almost a wonder, was not lost on the maiden. The water on the still solid ice of the river flashed up like liquid silver in her eyes; and already the early spring flowers — anemones, white and bluish purple, hepaticas, spring beauties, and the delicate spray-like blossom of the ground-nut, with its tiny flowerets, and innumerable plants and buds — were pricking up from the rich mould through the leaves.

A quantity of sirup was to be “sugared off” that afternoon, which had intensified Walter’s wish to be present. When they reached the sugar-house, he found a copperfull which had just reached the granulating stage, and this took his time and exclusive attention for the best of the ensuing hour. He continued his application to a period after warm sugar ceased to be sweet, had made much wax and candy, and blown clouds of bubbles of the viscid fluid. Then he took his gun and bag, and called



Edith for a stroll in the woods, where he could hear the calls of the gold and azure burnished male pigeons, and the squeaking, snarling bark of the squirrels. They were in the room adjoining the sugar-room, where the sirup underwent the last process ; and, just as they were passing out, Walter discovered Dr. Field riding along the sugar-camp road, which formed a continuous trail through the woods to another small settlement beyond.

“Here is Dr. Field!” said the delighted boy. “He has come to see us.”

“Not to see me,” said Edith, turning back. “He does not like me.”

“Don’t like you, Edith?” in amazement.

“No ; and he avoids me,” going to the back part of the large room.

The young man saw them, turned his horse up to the place where theirs were standing, left his own there, and walked toward the sugar-house. Walter met and sprang toward him as usual. As they entered the room where Edith was, Walter, remembering what she had just said, turned to the young man, and demanded in his loud and eager boy-way, —

“Philip ! don’t you like Edith?” The young man had just bowed to her, and he turned and looked at the boy in bewildered amazement. There the expectant child stood with his mouth open, impatient for an answer.

“Don’t I like Edith?” said the youth. “My God, Walter, what a question !” off his guard.

“She says you don’t, anyway,” added the boy, a little abashed at Field’s manner.

“She says I don’t !” still more amazed, turning a step or two toward Edith, who stood calm and cold. There was a pallor in his face. “She says I don’t ! Walter,” turning with agitation to the now bewildered boy, “in



her heart and soul she knows I would die for her!" This was uttered in a tone and with a manner that added to the poor child's alarm.

"Walter," said the now agitated Edith, coming forward, and taking him by the hand, "go out for a little while, do, and leave us."

The frightened, uncomprehending boy was only too glad to obey, and went at once, when, turning to Dr. Field, she said coldly, "We saw you coming, and he said you were 'coming to see us.' I turned back, and, as an excuse to him, I did say that you were not coming to see me. That you did not like me."

"You know that is not true, though like is not the word," he answered firmly and directly.

"How should I know?"

"I love you," with the utmost fervor.

"You love me! Love seeks, it does not avoid. This is jest, provoked by the thoughtless words of a child. The brute animals, all things, have been the objects of your care, of your tenderness—all but me." Her voice was firm, her form erect and proud. There was only a little tremor in the last three words. A moment, and she added, "I do not complain."

The youth stood with his head a little bent, and a tremor shook his frame under this accusation. When he lifted his face up, it was very pale, with deep lines as of torture fixed in it. Once or twice he attempted to swallow a choking sensation. He clasped his hands to suppress their tremor, and in a voice scarcely articulate he said, —

"Miss Grover, I am surprised into saying what will pain you, what I doubtless should some time have said." A pause. "My love will speak." A pause. "It is so hopeless, that it has little of earth or passion in it."



His voice shook almost too much for utterance, and great tears fell from his eyes. A moment's effort restored him. "You will reject this love — have, ere it is spoken: you shall not despise it. I can endure your scorn, I have felt that: I will not have your compassion."

"Philip, Philip!" cried the distressed girl. "For the love of Heaven how have I deserved this language?"

"You have not. But my love, so silent, so abject, rises in its rage, and will not be just." A pause. "You remember when we first met. I cannot wholly forget the cold scorn of that hour."

"I remember. You know the misconception under which I then labored; but, noble as I know you to be, you have treasured it up to avenge" —

"By going madly in love with you," he interrupted her with, in turn. "I saw your wondrous beauty even then: I was afterward, in a way, forced upon you, and saw the more wondrous beauty of your nature and soul. I loved you from the first. How could I help it? I could not even try. Oh, it is no jest! It was like heaven: it was heaven. It inspired and carried me through your father's awful illness, for awful it was. My position, your position, made you sacred from the suspicion of passion on my part. Then your mother chose to hold me as a gentleman, at liberty to pay you ordinary attention. You must have seen what I felt, and more wisely accepted me as your physician." A pause.

The cold and haughty air of the maiden had wholly disappeared. She stood with drooping head and averted face. At his last sentence she suddenly lifted her head, and cast a quick, furtive glance at the young man, who went on, —

"In the warmth and inspiration of your presence on that afternoon, I forgot your election. How could I help



it? You forgot it too, and I showed you my heart and soul, told all but my love in words. Then came the discovery of Walter. He was your counterpart, Edith, in another form, — to be served, fought for, and redeemed. Here my love found an object, an expression; and here, through little merit of mine, came rich compensation.”

His voice broke, and Edith was no less agitated.

“Forgive me, oh, forgive me! I pain you beyond measure. I will detain you but a moment. At Cleveland I was told you were the promised of another.”

Edith started at these words, and turned a look of wide-eyed surprise upon him, which he seemed not to notice.

“Afterward an accident, which I thought never to refer to, brought me a confirmation of it in your father’s library.”

“Dr. Field!” eagerly. “No matter.” And her head went down again.

“I am now awake,” unheeding her exclamation. “Perhaps I had not before fully comprehended the depth and hopelessness of my love, certainly not that it had the element of passion in it. I have schooled myself to the idea that you were to be the wife of another; to mould and temper my own love, so that it might ever surround you with service and devotion, without thought or stain of earth. I once dreamed of telling you all, as what every woman should know ere she accepts a final destiny. It could but pain you. When you returned, a few weeks ago, I found I was unequal to meeting you daily without some betrayal of myself. I doubtless have betrayed myself. I do not suppose I have revealed to you a secret. Have I been discourteous to you, wanting in ordinary attentions? Would I not have laid my heart under your feet? Have I not done it now? Would I not gladly kneel, and kiss their print on the earth, — the ground your shadow blesses,



—surround your life with devotion and reverent service? I have answered Walter's question. I cannot apologize or excuse. My love is all about you. Pass away from it without a word, it will not murmur" — a pause — "or — or — if you can turn to it for help, for comfort, or happiness" — He lost his voice, raised and extended his arms for a moment, as if to take her, and then dropped his hands, and a dry sob almost shattered his frame.

There was near a full minute's silence. If Edith waited for her lover to finish his sentence, she waited in vain. He stopped as abruptly as he began. She was little less moved than was he. She made a step nearer him, raised her hand, and seemed about to speak, when the door was suddenly thrown open, and half a dozen pigeons were thrown in, accompanied by the excited voice of Walter, crying loudly, "I killed 'em all at one shot!" followed by himself. Something in the looks and manner of the two, apparent even to him, arrested him at the door, and he turned his wondering look from one to the other. He was a little awed by the appearance of Field, and shrunk around him to his sister, as he recalled what was said before he left them.

"O Edith!" looking at her eagerly, as he nestled to her side, speaking in a subdued voice, "don't he like you? I most know he does. But he kissed me," a little doubtfully.

"Hush, hush, you darling!" cried the relieved girl, stooping, and throwing her arms about his neck, and kissing him with an ardor bewildering to him.

"He does like you, don't he?" asked the persistent boy plaintively.

"Yes, yes," kissing him again. He escaped from her arms, and appealed directly to Dr. Field, whom the assurances of Edith had restored to his confidence.



“What is it, Dr. Field? What has happened?” he asked in his innocence.

“I scolded her for what she said to you, and I have offended her very much,” in perfect sincerity.

“I don’t believe that,” said Walter decidedly. “He hasn’t scolded you, has he, Edith?” turning now to her.

“No,” she answered, “though he did talk a little wildly. You should not have told him what I said.”

“Are you angry with me, Philip?” he said, approaching the young man, and calling him by the name usually employed by his father and mother.

“Angry with you?” taking the child’s hand in both his own. “Nothing can ever make me angry with you. You did not mean any harm.”

“I am sorry,” said the uncomprehending child, quite inclined to whimper.

At this moment an inside door was opened from the sugar-room; and the civil superintendent politely asked Dr. Field to go in and partake of the warm sugar, a new copper-full having at that moment reached the desirable stage.

“Oh, don’t, Philip! It isn’t a bit good,” cried the disgusted Walter. “You and Edith come out and go with me into the woods and see me shoot.”

“I suppose, that, having eaten five or six pounds, you find that sugar has changed,” answered the distraught young man, not knowing what to say or do, or how to act, in the absurd, ridiculous position to which the betrayal and final interruption of the unknowing child had reduced him. What could he now say? Clearly nothing more to Edith. What could he do? Should he mount his horse, and ride away? He did not feel like that, however glad to have been elsewhere.

“Philip,” — what a thrill! she had called him by that



name once or twice before, but never as now, — “I think we had better go into the sugar-room.”

He turned eagerly to her; but her eyes were averted. She was no longer the proud, haughty woman who so coldly confronted him at the outburst of his passion, but sweet, drooping, almost timid. She may have had a motive. However deeply moved, she was one to recover quickly. She may not at that moment have wished to have a ramble in the woods with her lover, with the embarrassment of Walter, or at all. He was grateful for any suggestion, and complied at once, though I doubt whether he was better prepared to relish the exquisite maple-flavor than the cloyed Walter. A moment later, two or three young people from the Falls (acquaintances of Edith) arrived, making a further diversion in her favor, of which she readily availed herself.

An hour later, her friends departed. The sun was sinking, the air growing chill, and they were compelled to return: a movement by the three, toward the horses for that purpose, was made by a common impulse.

Walter handed his gun to Field, and got upon his horse.

The doctor returned it, and turned to Edith. She was standing in an absorbed mood by her horse, and striking absently, with her whip, at the plants and flowers at her feet. Unknowingly she cut the fine stem of a purple petalled flower, as he approached her. The fate of the beautiful thing touched him.

“Spare the flower, I pray you. It could not offend you,” he said a little sadly, stooping, and picking it up.

“Oh! I did not mean that; indeed I did not!” she said, with a sweet earnestness. “Give it to me, Philip,” extending her ungloved hand for it.

The youth laid it on the pinky palm of that beautiful hand, which bore no gem, was disfigured by no ring, and



looked at it on its exquisite resting-place. Something in the voice and manner of the young man, as if there was an omen in the death of the little flower, powerfully touched the sensibilities of the girl, disturbed as they were, and tears slowly gathered in her eyes.

“Philip, do you remember that night of our watch with my father, and the blessed dawn that followed it?”

“I do.”

“Do you remember that one exquisite afternoon in the woods?”

“Can I ever forget that?”

“I have never hidden my heart from you, Philip. Surely, surely, you should have trusted me.” Nothing more exquisitely sweet and tender, with just a tone of sad reproach, was ever uttered by mortal maiden.

“O Edith! What does this mean?” with trembling, eager hope, almost realized.

She frankly extended toward him the hand which held the flower. It was clasped in both his. He bent, and pressed his glowing lips to it again and again, while tear-drops fell upon it.

“The flower,” said the blessed girl, “I shall keep.” The hand that held it was his.

“What are you two a-doing now?” cried the impatient Walter, turning his horse’s head back. “Never was such a two as you are!”

From her unclasped hand Edith took the precious flower, and placed it in the upper folds of her dress, and said, —

“You may place me in my saddle, Philip,” and stepped from his extended hand to her seat; and a moment later they were by the side of the bewildered boy, who could see by their happy faces that there could be no further cause for anxiety.



“It is all right now, ain’t it, Edith?” he asked, looking into her glorified face.

“Ask Philip,” was her answer.

“It is all right, you blessed Walter!” was the young man’s response.

“Whora!” cried the relieved boy, glancing from one face to the other. “I knew it would be.” And then he fell into silence, almost awed by the spell which wrapped these two objects of his admiration, of his almost adoration.

When they reached the house, with the lingering steps of day still burning in the western sky, Edith conducted her lover at once to her own domain on the ground-floor of the west wing, never before entered by him. The glow of the west still lay warm on its windows, and lit up the interior with a rosy twilight. She felt that these first moments should be sacred to their hearts.

“Philip,” turning to him, “don’t think me lightly won. If I have ever seemed cold or indifferent, I may have feared my heart had gone to one who did not seek it.”

“Edith!”

“Nay, dearest, let me have my say now. I will never chide you. No plaint shall you ever hear from me again. Let this unrest of my heart be told you. No one has ever conferred greater benefits on another than have you so unselfishly on me,—a father’s life, a brother’s more than life. That you could think these had not won my whole heart, that you should turn away from me in blindness and darkness, and be so unhappy, was as cruel to me as to you. That you could think I had neither eyes nor heart; that I could have a thought of another—O Philip!”

. . . . .  
The return from the sugar-camp was known to the



whole household, and more than one knew that Edith had taken the doctor to her own drawing-room. Walter stopped and stood in open-mouthed wonder on the veranda, exclaiming to his approaching mother, —

“Well, mamma, I wonder what will happen next with Philip and Edith. She has just taken him into her own room.”

“Who? Philip? Where did you meet him?” eagerly.

“Why, he came to us at the sugar-house, and they two were shut up there more than an hour.”

“Hush, Walter! don’t speak so loud,” she said, coming close to him. “Tell me all about it.”

“Well, you see,” said the boy, without much abatement of voice, “when he came toward us, Edith up and said he didn’t like her, and ran into the house again; and, when he got in where she was, I told him what she said; and he was excited, and said she knew he would die for her. I can’t tell what happened next. I was scared, and Edith sent me out, and shut the door; and I was glad she did, for I got into the all-firedest big flock of pigeons” —

“Never mind the pigeons now, Walter. I want to know about Edith and Phillip. What did you next see of them?”

“Well, I had one bully shot anyway” —

“Don’t say that word. You went back to the sugar-house, and what did you see, Wallie dear?” coaxingly.

“I picked up seven pigeons, and the” —

“Yes, yes, yes! The rest flew away. Well?”

“Well, when I got back, I slung in the pigeons, and there stood the doctor, right where I left him, very pale, and looked as though he had been crying; and a little from him stood Edith, with tears all over her face, with her cheeks as red, and when I spoke to her she threw her arms around me, and hugged me, and kissed me. Well,



then came Ward, and asked the doctor in to eat sugar; and then came the Gardner girls; and when they went away we came home, and all they said — I asked Edith — No, when I got back to the sugar-house, the doctor said he had been a-scolding Edith for what she said that I told him on. And she said — Well, when we was a-coming home, I asked Edith if it was all right, and she told me to ask the doctor; and the doctor said it was. And it is, there!”

“My blessed Walter!” said his mother, kissing him with unction. “I am sure it is all right. And now let us go in and see papa.”

“Wal, if that ain’t the beatinist-all-thing that ever I see a gal do in all my born days, anyway!” exclaimed Ingles, raising her two hands in amazement, when Edith’s disposition of the doctor was reported to her, as it was a minute after it occurred. “She’s jes’ been an’ gone, an’ took Dr. Fields right smack inter her own room. Hain’t I got a rig on the doctor now, though? An’ him as bashful about it as a yearlin’. He was afeerd on ’er, an’ all the time jes’ ready to drop down dead for ’er. If I’d a ben ’im, I’d a jes’ gone an’ took an’ kist ’er right afore ’er mar; an’ she jes’ a pinin’ for ’im all the time! Never was two sech high fools. It was for all the world like one o’ them novils, only I thought there’d never be no come out to ’t. I’d like to know how this got started, I would. Wal, there never was sech a two pardners. Won’t there be a wedin’, though? My sakes alive! But this takin’ ’im inter ’er room beats me, that does. Ain’t I glad, though? Lord! thinks I, my young doctor, I could put a thing or two inter yer years. She knows what is what, if ever a gal did. Severton! Fiddlesticks! Wal, wal, wal! what a splendid couple they’ll make, though! Wal, wal!”



An hour later, and the lovers entered the room where the expectant parents, with Walter, awaited their approach. As they came forward, with their faces almost transfigured, the father and mother arose and went to meet them. Edith was the first to speak, —

“Father,” with exquisite *naïveté*, “here is a young man who wants to become your son-in-law.” She turned, and sprang into the arms of her mother. “We are all so happy, so blessed now!”

“To think that we owe this to Walter, after all, Philip,” said Edith. “How glad I am that his word brought it about! — You blessed boy, come and let me kiss you again,” she said to the happy child.

“He kissed me before he did you,” he said, pouting his lips. “Philip, why didn’t you kiss Edith when you did me? — You wanted him to, didn’t you, Edith?”

“Oh, you blessed Walter! you are not quite right yet; and Philip will have to take this naughty head of yours in hand again, I fear,” said the happy girl playfully.

“I guess he’ll have his hands full now, without that,” said the half-comprehending child.

When they went to the belated supper-table, they encountered the privileged Ingles, who called out, —

“What did I tell ye, Dr. Fields, way long back, when yer first come here?”

“Well, something about docterin’ cows, and luggin’ ’bout babies an’ gals,” said the young man, mimicking her voice and speech effectively.

“O docter, that ain’t fair! I ast yer parding for that, an’ ye forgive me. It wa’n’t that. But that mornin’, ye know, when Edith here was a-comin’ down the hall behind yer — don’t ye remember?”

Field looked a little grave, and remained silent.

“What was it, Ingles?” asked the laughing Edith.



“Wal, I’d said to the docter, says I to ’im, says I, ‘Why don’t you have a wife?’ An’ says ’e to me, says ’e, ‘Who’d be my wife?’ Says I to ’im, says I, ‘Look behind yer,’ ” laughing heartily. “Lord! I know’d how ’twould be.”

“You dear old Ingles,” said Edith, laughing and blushing, “what did he say?”

“You see, you’s then close by, and I jumped and run.”

“I knew your step,” said the young man, “and did not dare look round.”

What a blessed spring-time of love and sunshine, of revelation and communion, were the following days!

. . . . .

The day came, and many guests.

Rev. Mr. Humphrey officiated.

The bride and groom were congratulated.

The supper was eaten, and the guests departed.

At a later hour, as they entered the sanctuary of the bridal chamber, Edith turned, and laid her hand on the arm of her wedded lover.

“Do you remember what day this is, Philip?” she asked archly.

“Well, love, I am nearly past remembering any thing; but I think it is our wedding-day,” as if in doubt.

“Do you remember, Philip, once—oh, a great while ago!—of riding in a stage-coach on a rainy afternoon, with a young lady whom you had never seen before?”

A pause, in which Philip opened his eyes in a kind of soft wonder.

“That was just one year ago to-day,” with a little tremor in her voice.

“Hereafter, whenever you think of that ride, you will remember this day also; won’t you, Philip dearest?”



And her head went down on his shoulder with a little half sob.

“I shall forever bless that ride in the stage, dearest.”

And he infolded her with his arms.



# MONSON.

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## CHAPTER I.

### UNCLE TOM.

SOME very pleasant recollections and associations cluster around the name of Monson.

They say I was born in Monson, amid the Massachusetts hills ; and away to the north of my mother's Ohio cabin were the Monson woods, named for that older Monson. Interminable they seemed to my childish imagination, stretching unbrokenly north. Two or three times after the Coes moved into the northern part of Newbury, I had been across the intervening woods, north-westerly, along the Bosworth road, past the Bosworth clearing, and taken the Coe path to Coe's, who had a fulling-mill on Coe's Creek, a beautiful woodland stream, which ran away to the unknown north-west, through Monson and Russell, to far-off Chagrin River, more remote and legendary then than is now the Red River of the North.

I had several times been down this creek with the young Coes, John, Jerry, and Orville, spearing suckers in the warm April days. Miles I had followed its widening, deepening channel, but never came to a house, or sound of woodman's axe, or sign of man. I knew that away some-



where in the middle of the forest lived the Hoveys ; and can remember that a white-haired old man in silk small-clothes and shoe-buckles, and a bent, snowy old woman in rich black silks, with narrow skirt falling straight from a waist up under the arms, — Down-East magnates of an olden time, large proprietors of rich Monson lands, — were once at our house ; and Asahel Davis from beautiful Maple Hill, and the Stoddards, used to come over to our militia trainings ; and I had heard of the Hazens.

Once, too, upon a time, I ran away from Chardon, across intervening Monson, home to my mother, when I was nine years old. One warm July morning, with a little bundle, I ran off south down Chardon Hill on the old State road, and struck the woods by the old Bailey place, and traversed alone the six miles of unbroken forest, over hills, through valleys, across streams and swamp-lands, till I reached Judge Stone's at North Newbury, meeting crazy Halsey Spencer in mid-forest, — a stalwart, robust figure, hatless, barefoot, and half nude, sunburned and haggard, with frenzy in his eyes, — driven mad by the treachery or cruelty of the woman he loved. He had then escaped from confinement. What a sad tragedy was his whole life, raving mad, and only restored by death, which delayed its approach till the generations of men forgot him ! I saw him coming, and hid in a thicket of young maples till he passed me.

Monson remained a wilderness, with but few inhabitants, till all the other townships, even Russell, were well peopled and improved, and the few settlers in it were much isolated, and had a reputation for rude ways and customs of their own. I remember very well, when I commenced the practice of law at Chardon in 1841, we had a way of saying that such a young lady's dress was Monsony. "He looks as if he came from Monson." —



“You must have got that coat in Monson.” — “That hat was cut off from the butt end of a woodchuck’s hole in Monson.” A riot, a tin-horning of a newly married pair on their wedding-night, was Monson style.

My residence in Chardon Village, near the north-eastern corner of Monson, brought me much better acquainted with its inhabitants. Her township had at that time pretty well filled up; and although there were many intelligent, well-to-do families within its borders, attracted by the unusual fertility of the soil, still the primitive type of rather rude manners prevailed, and there were within its precincts a hard set, — some women not so good as they should be, and some young men improved by being sent to the penitentiary. It was isolated, and long known as the “State of Monson.” It was a great place for petty lawsuits; and many were my sharp contests, before Esquire Fowler, Esquire Allen, and old Esquire Harris, who had a cure of soles as well, and often heard us from the bench, where he judiciously heeled a shoe, and judicially healed a breach of the peace at the same time. Oh, what desperate contests I used to have before these worthies with my rival O. P. Brown, who was an immense favorite there! It was the only Democratic township in the county, and O. P. and myself had been opposing candidates for prosecuting attorney in the great campaign of 1840. From the day we met in a field-fight at Troy in the canvass, to the day of his death, years ago, we were bosom friends. All Monson used to come out to hear us in these legal and illegal contests.

It was during some of the earlier of these judicial excursions that I first met Tom Hazen, whom I occasionally encountered in the Monson forums. He was a striking character, one of the first settlers in the woods, coming from the borders of New England and Canada. Of rough,



gigantic mould, tall, broad, heavy-shouldered, and brawny-limbed, no one knew the measure of his strength, and capacity to endure. He had a big head; high, narrow forehead; shaggy brows over deep-set, small, twinkling, good-natured blue eyes; a nose that had been "bulled" early, and never lost its "upward tendency;" broad mouth, around which a smile usually played. Roughly and scantily clothed was he, even in winter. He was a man to be everywhere marked. His education was of the border, which at the time of his graduation did not embrace a character of the English alphabet in its curriculum. He afterwards mastered so much of literature as to be able to read, and could write what his acquaintances came to know as his signature. He was, during the early annals of Monson, a sort of king, ruling by divine right of the strongest, not by virtue of his great physical power, though marked and arbitrary as was his will. A natural-born diplomatist, and master of finesse, he was one of the softest spoken of men, and had trained a voice of the greatest power to the lowest and sweetest accents. Always bland, always smiling, graceful and courteous in manners, never off his guard and never losing temper, with quick perceptions, acute and great strength of mind, in a different field adequate culture would have made him ruler of a great State rather than the rude and ragged lord of the barony of Monson. There was a large group of stalwart sons, seven or eight, about him, who partook of his physical qualities; but while some of them showed fair capacity, none of them inherited the intellectual qualities of their father. Too illiterate to fill any office under the laws of the State at large, he was law-maker, governor, and judge, outside of the statutes, in his primitive neighborhood, and ruled with natural equity and moderation. In his own affairs thrifty and long-headed, oily, suave,



and politic, he was apt to have the best of it, and men much preferred to secure his intervention in their affairs with others than to have transactions with him on his own account. He was past the golden day of rule in Monson, and that had ceased to be an independent State, ere my acquaintance with him ; but he often appeared before the justices in small cases constantly arising among his former subjects, where he was a dangerous opponent. His tower of strength, refuge, and sanctuary was his complete illiterateness, and utter ignorance of the law. This, which would be fatal to a common man, was by him played with a skill and ingenuity that rose to an art. Always deferential, and obsequiously respectful to an opponent, he often excited the surprise of the spectators, that with all his learning, skill, and eloquence, his antagonist should have made so poor a showing, arguing that it must be from the utter poverty of his case ; while his own, with all his ignorance and weakness, and notwithstanding the consequent injury he did, was, as all could see, so strong, clear, and just. He was shrewd in preparing witnesses, and, though not very fluent, ingenious, and one of the most persuasive of men in the presentation of his case ; and we often had to take to the Common Pleas contemptible cases where he had persuaded the justices to disregard the commonest rules of law and right.

He carried on an extensive ashery, was well known to business men in Cleveland and Painesville, where he went in his scant, well-worn homespun, and often astonished the leaders in trade, as much by the grace with which he would lift his fragment of a hat, and bow to a lady, as by the shrewdness and sagacity of his remarks, made in the most vicious of language.

I remember a little story of Monson, with which Uncle Tom Hazen was somewhat mixed, and to which I am pleased to call the foregoing an introduction.



## CHAPTER II.

ELSIE AND JOHN.

AMONG the later-comers into the State was Jim Trask, with his family. He was about thirty years of age, a good-natured, easy-going man, with the reputation of having a rich father in York State, who purchased for him a fine, partly improved farm, and helped him build a good farm-house, stock his farm, and put him well a-going. His wife was a person of another sort, — ambitious, thrifty, intelligent, good-looking, and tasteful, as was shown by her neatly fenced and well-kept yard, planted out with shrubs and flowers, her well-arranged house, and tidily dressed children. She had a fine person and pleasant manners, and was soon regarded as a leading woman: while Jim kept a hired man, a pair of horses and light wagon, and had a good deal of driving up to Chardon, and permitted his farm-work to drive him; or it would, had not his wife taken that useful office upon herself. Jim was a good friend of mine. He aided me to collect an old note-of-hand of the incorrigible John Kelley, by buying Kelley's horses, and giving him a negotiable note for them, which he did not pay; and when sued on it he set off Kelley's own negotiable note, which I had transferred to him in advance, against his own note, — a species of legal legerdemain on my part which won for me the respect and awe of Monson generally. Even Uncle Tom transferred his favor to me on the strength of it. It was a method after his own heart.



In the family of the Trasks lived Elspieth Wilson, a young orphan-girl of some seventeen at the time of the occurrences I am to relate. Her mother, a widow, lived in the neighborhood when the Trasks came into Monson, — a feeble, helpless creature of better days and other fortunes, stranded there, and left to perish, and who had received much kindness at the hands of Mrs. Trask, who, at her death some two years before, promised the dying mother to receive Elsie, as she was called, into her own house, and care for her. This she did quite faithfully. It was the day of close living, hard work, plain and scant dressing, even for sons and daughters; and Mrs. Trask had been educated in its economies. She came from another community, where there was a marked difference between the children of the mistress and the hired girl, and the Trasks were on a higher plane than the widow. Elsie, of course, must work for her living, and at some time would become the wife of some young, hard-working farmer; and it was the best thing for her that she should grow up with habits of industry, thrift, and economy, and with views and notions not above her level. While in a certain sense she was an equal, it was an equality which easily admitted of a difference, which Mrs. Trask did not intend the young girl should lose sight of. Elsie, however, was one of those endowed persons who may not be quite amenable to ordinary rules. Her mother was a woman of some culture; and the young girl, an only child, intelligent beyond her years, was quite superior to the average mature woman of her neighborhood. Nature had given her a person which at fourteen was very attractive, and promised quite rare beauty at maturity, which with her would occur early in her life. Her form, of ordinary height, round for her years, a sprightly face, with a carnation and white complexion, wide gray eyes, fine brow, and



golden-brown hair, sweet-tempered, docile, healthy, and strong, with a temper that nothing could ruffle, and spirits which nothing could cloud — such was Elsie. She became the faithful maid-of-all-work, and as near a drudge as Mrs. Trask's sense of justice would permit. She had also an aptitude for dress, and with the scantiest means always managed to array herself, on the few occasions permitted to her, with a taste and skill, which, joined with her modesty and a certain natural air of elegance and grace, marked her for a lady born, whatever fortune might await her. As she grew up and developed, Mrs. Trask came to regard her with a sort of half-jealousy, a good deal of respect, some secret admiration, and much unspoken liking. The children worshipped her. With the neighbors she was a favorite, and Mrs. Trask was seriously afraid that James would spoil her. Good, kind, easy soul, he could see no difference, and was constantly forgetting it in his treatment of her, and was doing things for her as if she were one of them, and would take her with them as one of the family, of whom he was proud and fond; and his wife had all she could do, in her shrewd woman's way, to keep the distinctions in sight. As for Elspieth, poor thing, she had no expectations, or seemingly no wish in life, but to do faithfully and devotedly whatever came to her hands. She had her mother's Bible, and a few things of hers, mementos of happier days, of which the child had only heard her mother speak. Everybody about her worked hard and lived poorly, but what of it? The world was very beautiful, God and the Saviour were ever at hand to those who sought them, and her life was full of sunshine. She loved James, jun., she loved little Ann, and quite worshipped the baby. She loved and respected her mistress, and was quite fond of Mr. Trask, good soul, who was kind to her.



When the Elder Trask planted Jim in Monson, he also bought about two hundred acres of superior land on the creek which flowed from Monson Pond, a beautiful little lake within two miles of Chardon. The bottoms of this lovely stream were of great fertility. There was a small improvement on the premises, and under Jim's direction quite an extensive new clearing was made and a farm barn built. This was intended as a farm for John Trask, jun., the youngest of the family, about whom a great deal was said by Jim, his wife, and a married sister who lived in Chardon. As the youngest, he was the favorite, was given or took superior advantages of education, supplied with a freer hand, and was much more indulged than Jim or any of the rest had been.

Finally it began to be rumored that John was coming on to take possession of his farm, and establish himself in life; and furtively it was talked over in the private Trask circle that John had become a little wild, was inclined to be fast, and on the whole would be sent off to the Monson woods a little earlier than was intended, for his reformation, or at least to escape threatened peril.

He came in the fall, brought a fine horse and a fancy Eastern-made buggy, then much prized in Ohio. He was about twenty-three, tallish, slender, well-made, handsome, with splendid black eyes and hair, well dressed, frank and free spoken, and quite noticeable anywhere; in Monson a sensation. Jim and his wife and sister were very proud of him, introduced him about, and he was made much of. After visiting and driving round a few days, he went about work on his farm, hired men to chop, cut saw-logs, build fences, and took hold with a good deal of apparent vigor. His brother's house was nearer to his farm than his sister's, was more roomy; and, while he boarded with a family who lived on his place,



he made his headquarters at Jim's, kept his clothes there, and always went there on Sundays.

There was a hard set of young men about Monson at that time, who did not limit themselves merely to drinking and an occasional fight: their lawlessness ran in other channels. Dick Miller, Eph Corning, one of the young Davises, all of whom had been away and picked up other notions of vice, who were a little beyond the Monson style of dress, managed to have horses and money. Dick especially was a handsome, dashing, profligate scamp, with a coarse wit, and supposed to be very dangerous to young girls, and whose pursuits and inclinations ran in feminine channels. Then there were half a dozen lesser lights in the same constellation. There were also several women, — the Cooley girls down by Butternut Creek, Nance Kelley, and two or three more of that kind of doubtful character which leaves no doubt at all.

Kelley, who lived a little out of the way, kept as vile a little whiskey and other hole as there existed, — a sort of rendezvous for various purposes. The young men referred to occasionally came up to the village of Chardon, oftener resorted to Cowles's tavern, a new house at North Newbury, infested Fowler's mills, and made several neighborhoods lively, and a good many nights hideous. There was a criminal element among them; but when we sent Jim Blair, Briggs Hawley, and Groshong to the penitentiary, it relieved that region of serious depredations upon property.

These vagabonds took a great fancy to young John Trask; and Dick, in an especial way, paid court to him. John lived by himself, knew nothing of Miller, except that he was a dashing, handsome fellow some years older than himself, with that sort of manner and experience rather fascinating to a youth of twenty-three, who feels the stir of



his own pulse. Dick had a way of throwing himself into John's company, asked him to ride, managed to ride with John, told him of his gallantries and adventures, offered to take him to Cooley's, and did take him to Kelley's. Kelley was a character, belonged to a good family in Vermont, where he swindled a man, and, having run out East, he was obliged to run out West, and Monson, a miniature Texas of that day, took him.

"So you are Jim Trask's brother?" Kelley said to John, looking him coolly over. "Well, as the fashion of dinners is, the old man saved the best to the last."

"You see," said Dick, "he don't like Jim. His doin' 'im out of them hosses sticks in 'is crop."

"I don't owe Jim no grudge. He did it as slick as greased ile. You see, Jim Trask's note is as good as the Western Reserve Bank; while John Kelley's — well, not above par — he suspended specie payments long ago. No redeemer liveth for his paper. Wal, you see, Jim managed to swap my note for his'n, and git a d—d fine span of hosses to boot. I don't mind the paper, there's plenty on it; but the hosses — I'm blowed if I ever did quite see through it."

"Ah! the feller that did Jim Blair did the business," said Miller.

"Of course your brother Jim is an infernal lunk-head anyway. I don't owe him no grudge. But that feller on the hill — cuss me! if I ever have any thing agin, I'll get even with him."

Kelley's career as a hotel-keeper was short. The grand jury indicted him again, and the traverse jury convicted him. It was before the Democratic associate judges, Wright, Bosley, and Brackett, who remorselessly sentenced his hole to be closed, and him to jail. Kelley, in revenge, told the Court that "it was a Demerara team anyway."



“What is a Demerara team?” demanded Judge Wright, who presided.

“A jackass with a mule on each side o’ him, your Honor,” when, amid shouts of laughter, John was taken below.

More than once Dick, in young Trask’s company, had made allusion to Elsie Wilson,—at first slyly, and then more openly, winding up, “She’s one on ’em,” when the other chaps would laugh. It annoyed John, but he kept silent.



## CHAPTER III.

## HOW JOHN MISBEHAVED.

It was not in nature for a young man to see Elsie without being moved, or meet her often without becoming interested in her. To John she became the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. She was sweeter than she was beautiful, and seemed more good than sweet. From morning to night, bright, cheerful, and light-hearted, singing, laughing, or talking, though she was not a great talker, faithful, modest, and sensible. Jim's wife feared how it might be. She could see that John was much smitten, and she was concerned. It would never do. He a Trask, and she a little nobody. Why need she be so beautiful and good, or why couldn't she have been somebody's child? Was John her own brother? Well, if Elsie was of a family like the Trasks, or even her own, she never saw a girl she would choose so soon for him. The fact was, it had been thought that her own family were not much; and she knew that nothing but her personal merit made her acceptable, and now to permit John, in her house, to go a step lower for no matter what miracle of beauty and goodness, would never do. What could she do? She knew there would be no use in speaking to John about it, nor of avail to send Elsie away. She could not spare her, and sending her off would do no good now. She could not even pray that God would so rule as that this thing should not happen, for she thought it was just the thing he would do: indeed, were she the disposer, she



would have so arranged that it would be the thing; and she had no idea he would interpose to prevent it anyway. She watched Elsie very closely when John was there, which was very often. Nothing could be more circumspect and proper than was her conduct. So far as she could see, the girl was utterly indifferent, so much so, that she wondered, was a little piqued at it. She, a little nobody, seventeen years old, there in the woods, who had never seen anybody, not to be struck by this handsome young man, so well dressed and gentlemanly! There was no use in saying a word to Jim, easy, good soul: it would just suit him. One thing she could do, — she could, in a certain way, put Elsie on her guard, little as she seemed to need it.

“I expect,” she said to the girl one day, “that John will be going back for a wife some time.”

“When?” looking up with a bright, interested expression.

“Well, next summer, perhaps.”

“Oh, that will be so nice! And will he bring his wife here? He will at first, won’t he?”

“Of course, till he builds a house.”

“I should so like to see her. She must be a real lady.”

“What makes you think so?”

“Why, he wouldn’t have anybody but a lady. Do you know her?”

“Yes — no — that is, I don’t exactly know as I do.”

“Is she very beautiful and educated?”

“Oh! I s’pose so. You see, he don’t say much about it to me, and you need not tell him I told you about it.”

“You don’t suppose I’d be likely to, do you?”

Sweet innocence!

“Well, I don’t know.”



On the whole, Mrs. Trask did not know whether to be pleased or annoyed at the result of this giving Elsie notice. Perhaps she was a little of both. Time ran on into the winter. John ran about with Miller a good deal, and was bantered about Elsie by him, and came rather to like it; and his visits to his brother's were, if any thing, more numerous, and Mrs. Trask fancied that his manner toward Elsie had changed slightly. He had a way of looking at her which she did not like. She could not tell what it was, nor why she did not like it; and she increased her vigilance when he was there, which was hardly necessary.

The two were never for a moment really alone. It is true John came home with Elsie once from a spelling-school, but James was with them; and he brought her home from the day-school two or three times, but the two oldest children were with them; and once he had walked home with her alone from an evening visiting, that is, they came along right behind Jim and his wife.

Something happened between them, however, along late in the winter, which Mrs. Trask never did get to know the exact truth of; but it occasioned her much anxiety, and gave sweet Elsie one of her first lessons in the study of men. John came along just at evening, one afternoon, with his sleigh, to carry Jim's wife to Chardon to buy some much-needed thing which could not be had at Harper's store. When he came, she was suffering horrors from a nervous headache, and could not go, and sent Elsie, who was quite willing to do the errand; and in a few minutes, cosily wrapped in warm buffaloes, close by John's side, she was flashing on her way to town. Fences, houses, cabins, hovels, trees, ran back past them, and she was in a little ecstasy all the too short way. Her purchase was soon made, but John lingered a little; and when they



went home, instead of driving directly back, he took a roundabout way of seven or eight miles, and it got to be quite dark and a little late. Elsie was concerned, and once or twice gently expressed her fear that Mrs. Trask would be anxious and displeased, at which John only laughed, and seemed not in the least hurry. At length, while rising a hill, the young man placed his left arm around her and tried to draw her toward him. At first the innocent child supposed it was merely to adjust the wraps. When the real purpose flashed upon her, she removed the intruding arm decidedly. It was returned more unequivocally.

“Mr. Trask!” throwing his arm from her, and turning upon him with a flash.

“Oh, — ha, ha, ha! why, how squeamish you are! All girls permit that.”

“I am not all girls — nor one of them.”

“Will you not, though?” throwing his arm about her an instant by main force.

“There, we will see,” he said, liberating her.

“We will,” she said, springing from the sleigh the instant she was released, and fleeing along the hard snow-track in advance of the horse.

“Elsie, Elsie! for God’s sake stop! Elsie, hear me! do, I implore you!”

She did not stop, however, when, leaping from the sleigh and leaving his horse, the frightened, punished youth ran after, passed, and turned and confronted her.

“Miss Wilson, for God’s sake don’t crush me. I was to blame — most infernally to blame. You must stop, and get back into the sleigh.”

“I will not. By your strength you may stop me here, if you are unmanly enough to use it on me. Go with Dick Miller to the Cooley girls. That is the place for you,” with flashing scorn.



“Elsie, I implore, I entreat, have some mercy on a thoughtless, rude feller. If you knew what I really in my heart and soul think of you” —

“I don’t care. Let me pass.”

“Yes, if you will have no mercy, walk home. Tell Jim’s wife. Let us be met, with you walking alone, and let me be disgraced. I deserve it. I am a fool, but I am no worse. Do you wish to punish me more, — to humiliate me worse? Don’t think me a villain. You will get in and let me take you home? I am a brute, and it was unmanly to use my strength as I did. I did not then think it a crime.” A silence. “Say that you will get into the sleigh and ride home? What would anybody think who should come along and see us here?”

The horse had walked along up till he came to where they were standing, and stopped. John took him by the bit, turned him one side, and led him along till the sleigh stood by the silent girl’s side. He offered his hand to help her in, but without noticing it she stepped into the sleigh and sat down. He sprang into his place by her side, and attempted to replace the wraps over her, which she refused to receive.

“May I do nothing for you, Miss Wilson?” in the most respectful way.

“Yes.”

“What?”

“Drive me home at once,” imperiously.

“Is that all?”

“No.”

“What else?”

“Never speak to me again.”

Gathering up the reins, the horse was permitted to go off at his best gait; and five minutes later, as Elsie was about to step from the sleigh, John spoke the first word uttered by either since they entered the sleigh.



“Miss Wilson, do you intend to tell Jim’s wife of what I did?”

“Can a girl tell of such a thing, think you?” and with her parcel she went in without another word. She laid her package on the table in the sitting-room, where Mrs. Trask, now quite recovered, was sitting with her children, and hurried up stairs to her little cold, dark room, shut herself in, alone, never in her life feeling so utterly desolate, and threw herself down on her hard bed, and broke into sobs.

As she laid down her package, her mistress had only time to say, “Why, Elsie, what has happened?” While she was still in suspense, John came in. His face bore signs of emotion quite as apparent as those which marked the features of the girl.

“Well, John, where have you been, and what has happened?”

“As to where we have been, I thought I would give Elsie a little ride around by North Newbury.”

“You did not stop there?”

“No. And as to what happened—I’ve been playing the biggest kind of d——d fool!”

“Don’t swear, John.”

“Nothing else fits it,” gloomily.

“With Elsie?”

“With Elsie.”

“John, if you dare to trifle with the heart of that young girl”—

“Trifle! Hum! She’d be more likely to trifle with mine.”

“What do you mean?—and she my girl, my hired girl, one of my own family, in fact.”

“Oh! I was punished as man never was for such an offence. I did not think it was much.”



“What was it?”

And he told her with a straight-forward candor beautiful to see.

“I never can understand a man, John,” she said sadly.

“Well, I’ll have to work my time out, I suppose,” was his disconsolate reflection.

“What did she do?”

“Sprang out o’ the sleigh quicker’n lightning ; and I had to go down on my knees, almost, before she would get in again.”

“It would have served you right if she had walked home. You would have looked pretty ; she walking, and you tagging on after her, and your horse on after you — ha, ha, ha ! You, John Trask, junior, I’m ashamed of you.”

“So am I,” gloomily.

“The poor child ! Her face was as white as if it had been frozen ; and she never said a word !”

“Can I see her?” humbly.

“No, you can’t : she sha’n’t be disturbed to-night.”

“All right. Good-night,” and he strode away. He could not disabuse his mind or senses of the impression made on them by Dick Miller. He could not think illy of Elsie. He had not what are called designs against her. Perhaps he wanted to approach her, try and see. If that was his purpose, he certainly did see ; and he went away from his brother’s about as flatly humiliated a young man as one might wish to see. One or two things were quite apparent to him now. He loved her beyond doubt or cavil. He had probably lost any chance he might ever have had of winning her. She despised him, would hate him, and that was the end of it.

After he went out, Mrs. Trask arose, and with a candle sought Elsie in her room. The girl was weeping quietly,



with her face buried in the bed-clothes. The kind-hearted woman placed her candle on the small stand, sat down on the bed, passed her arm over the prone form, and whispered soothing words in Elsie's ear. Gradually she ceased to weep, raised her head, and turned to the kind face bent over her, when her eyes met those of her mistress. "He has told," she cried, covering her face with her hands.

"Don't mind it, dear. You were not a bit to blame, and behaved like a true-hearted girl. Men are so queer. They don't think of these things as we do."

"What must any man think of a girl" —

"Oh! they don't think at all. They are coarse and rude. I don't excuse him at all, and he don't excuse himself, and it was a good lesson to him. There, don't think of it; get up and come down. I have saved some supper for you. You are cold. He has gone. You won't see him to-night. Of course he will come here, for this is his home, you know."

"Yes, I am only a hired girl. You can easily find another. My staying or going cannot signify to — any of your friends."

"Don't talk so. You will feel better to-morrow;" and the young girl followed her mistress down to the warm, cheerful rooms below, drank a cup of tea, warmed herself, and went to bed exhausted and wretched.



## CHAPTER IV.

## CORNSTALK MOLASSES.

As time elapsed John grew more dissatisfied with himself and his relations to Elsie. In his honest soul it did not seem to him that his offence was very great; but she had chosen to regard it so, and the consequences were as grave to him, almost, as if he had attempted her murder. Two days after the occurrence he called at his brother's, and she did not make her appearance. He called the succeeding day, with the same result. He drove around by the schoolhouse just as the children left it for home, at evening, a day or two later, and took the little boy and girl into his cutter; when Elsie announced that she was going home with a school-girl friend, and did.

And then, boy like, he was angry, and swore to himself he did not care, and repeated it, so as to assure himself of the truth of that assertion, and went off and staid away a week, and then went again to Jim's house and saw her, and she met him with the cool indifference of one to whom he was of no earthly consequence for good or ill.

During these days he was an object of anxious observation to Mrs. Trask. It became very apparent to her that he was deeply smitten, and she began to feel uneasy as to the result. She knew that boys had a score of fancies before they became deeply interested, and often thought they were over head and ears in love when they only had a fit of spleen or dyspepsia. But John was no



dyspeptic. He was a robust, well-made, healthy young man, now past his twenty-fourth birthday, of quick perceptions, and knew pretty well what he wanted, and had now for a month been moping about as silent and glum as a sinner under conviction, as he was. Even Jim noticed it.

“Why, what’s the matter with John, I wonder. He’s bluer’n skimmed milk,” he said one day.

“Oh, I don’t know! He is not behaving very well,” answered his wife.

“He’s broke with Dick Miller. I heard him cut ’im up sharp the other day,” Jim added.

Mrs. Trask was not over well pleased with Elsie. What right had she to remain so permanently incensed, as if girls had never been squeezed before, or as if she was of better clay than others? True, she had feared the most of any thing that she would fall in love with her handsome brother-in-law, and felt that it was due to him that she should. She could see that he was first favorite with the rustic maidens of Monson. True, nothing could come of it but heartache for her, yet no girl ever secured her first love. It was a sort of scarlet fever which most young women had early, and it injured but few; and, on the whole, she did not like it.

John was not a man to give up a thing he had set his heart on, without a decided effort. He would certainly see this young woman, and have a serious talk with her, and was on the lookout for an opening. He must find her at home, alone, some Sunday, when the seniors were at church. But she either went with them, or they did not go. Finally they were invited to a little party at Squire Allen’s one evening, as was he: Elsie would be alone. He went there, and found her. It was quite early in the evening, though the children had gone to bed; and the



young girl, who had grown quite thoughtful, was sitting with her head on her hand, feeling as if she had grown old, when a timid knock came at the door. It was like a girl's, but they had no near neighbors. Elsie was not a timid girl, but bade the knocker come in, as was the custom, instead of which came another tap. She went to the door, opened it, and there stood John Trask.

"Your brother and his wife are not at home."

"I know it. May I come in? I came on purpose to see you."

He took off his hat, his voice was very sad-like, and there was an appealing, wistful look in his eyes. Elsie stood for an instant, and dropping her eyes turned and walked away a step or two, leaving the door open. "This is your brother's house, Mr. Trask; I am only his hired girl: you can come or go without my leave," she said coldly.

"You are the mistress to-night; and it is to you I come, and, if you say I may not, I shall go," he said from the outside. "I want very much to talk with you. You said I was to avoid you: if you will let me say a few words to you, I will, if you still wish it. You are a woman now."

She set a chair for him, and sat down in another a little remote. He came in, closed the door and stepped toward her, paused, and hesitated.

"Will not you sit down, Mr. Trask?"

"I know I am not welcome," he said, "and must not stay long, and that makes it so much harder to say what I wanted to; and it was not easy anyway. I wanted to say something about what happened between us that night. Miss Wilson, I loved you then: I—I"—

"I don't want such love," with spirit.

"I didn't know there was but one kind."

"Well, I think yours is like old Miss Rogers's cornstalk molasses." scornfully.



“Why do you say that?”

“Because she said the less of it she used, the sweeter her things were.”

“Well, Miss Wilson, I must say you know how to be rough on a feller; and I could laugh at that sometimes, but I can’t now. Is there nothing I can say or do to convince you, that, though my love is like cornstalk molasses, it is sincere, and the best a man has to offer?” And, taking a step nearer, he frankly extended his hand to her. “If you will take my hand, and become my wife, I will be your husband, and love you with a man’s true love so long as I live.”

He said it quite well, and with a tremor in his voice, and an intense earnestness which left no doubt of his absolute sincerity.

“O Mr. Trask!” cried the astonished girl, “you cannot mean this!”

“I do mean it;” still holding out his hand to her, and speaking with increased fervor.

She sprang up, walked across the room, and came back.

“I thought—that is supposed—somebody said that there was a young lady down East,” a little confused.

“There are lots of young ladies down East, but none for me.”

“Really and truly?”

“Truly. I may be a cornstalk man, but I ain’t one of that sort. That is some of Jim’s wife’s stories. She has had her head full of stuff about you and me.”

“You should not make me this—this offer, Mr. Trask. I am a little nobody. Your father and sister would never consent if I did.”

“I am only concerned about your consent. I don’t want you for my father.”

“He is said to be a very nice old gentleman,” very brightly.



“He’s all right ; but, if he ain’t, I can’t help it. When he comes to see you, he’ll be glad I was so fortunate — if I am to be fortunate.”

“Mr. Trask” —

“Call me John, please.”

“Well, John, there is one thing which some one ought to say to you, I am sure,” hesitatingly.

“Well, you say it now, please.”

“I don’t know how. It is something Mrs. Trask, and your sister Mrs. More, are anxious about. You go with that Miller, and — and a good many others.”

“You don’t care about it, I s’pose?” he said.

“I heard about it. I cared for it on their account.”

“On your own account?”

“Oh ! I have no account of my own,” smiling.

“None with me? Pretty good. Please open one with me — double entry, do. Well, I’ve been a bad boy. You never suspected me of going to Cooley’s?”

“Indeed, I did not : I thought you were a gentleman.”

“Till that night. O Elsie, you need never fear for me again. You would not be afraid to trust me, would you?”

“No. — And now, John, this is so sudden. Be yourself, be a man, and after a year” —

“A full year, Elsie?”

“I am so young, and your father is coming out next summer,” she said.

“Well, at the end of a year — then what?”

“If you love me, you can then ask me any thing. Is that long to try one?”

“Do you want to try me, Elsie?”

“I want to try myself also, John.”

“Oh ! that is it, is it? Well, will you give me your hand on this : If I am a true man, shun Dick, the Cooleys,



tend my farm, hoe corn, for twelve months, I may come and ask you to be my wife? What do you suppose you will say to that?"

"That would be answering you now. How do I know what I will say then?"

"Well, will you give me your hand on this? Shake hands on it, that this is the understanding between us?"

"Yes," she said, holding out her hand. "Here is my hand: you can trust me."

"I know I can," taking it in both his. "And you may trust me."

"I do."

"And, Elsie, may I kiss this hand? What a little one it is to work with!" caressing it.

As she said nothing, but looked down and did not withdraw it, he lifted it, and bent his face over it, and pressed his red lips to it reverently.

"And, Elsie, do you forgive me for what happened that night?"

"Yes," still looking down, though her color rose.

"Do you love me a little?"

"That is the thing you are to ask me," archly.

"Oh! is it? Well Elsie, — dear Elsie, — may I not have one little kiss? Just one? One to live on?"

"That will be an answer to the thing you are to ask me."

"Oh, dear!" and there was a real sadness in his voice that went to the young girl's heart. "Not as an answer to that, but that you forgive me. Not a kiss of love, but of pardon."

"You may kiss my cheek for that, John," quite appreciating the distinction, and he did; and somehow his lips just managed to touch hers. The warm blood flushed cheek and brow.



“Indeed! Indeed, Mr. Trask! You said I might trust you,” reprovingly.

“You may, you shall trust me! And now I will go. See how good I am. When I have got a chance to win a right to stay I go.”

“Mr. Trask?”

“*Mr. Trask!* I won’t go, unless you call me John.”

“I shall know how to keep you then, John. Shall I tell Mrs. Trask that you were here, and what you said, and what I said?”

“Not what I said: that is my business. She has no right to know what I say.”

“I should tell my mother, if I had one.”

“I should want you to; but she isn’t your mother. She is a good friend of *mine*, and a good friend enough of *yours*. But she is not a very good friend of *ours*. Do you understand that, dear?”

“I think I do,” smiling as she took in the complex idea.

“And now will you shake hands, and say good-by? and when I come again, you will come round and let me say good-morning without freezing me? What is the use in trying to spoil your face by looking cross? You can’t do it when you try.”

“It don’t do any harm, then?”

“You make me feel badly by trying.”

She gave him her hand, he kissed it, went out, and hurried to Esquire Allen’s. When he was gone, Elsie ran and brought down her mother’s Bible, and sat down by the baby’s crib, with a great peace in her heart, and the light of hope in her eyes. He loved her even then, and though rude, his touch did not profane. One of the bitter things was that he could not have loved her, but she now knew he did. That was only a man’s incomprehensible way.



More than once the next morning the searching eyes of her mistress were on the happy girl's face. "Elsie, tell me," she said, "was John here last night?"

"Yes, he was;" and she could not help the flash of color that flew over her face, and she was too proud to turn it away.

"What did he say to you?"

"You must ask him."

"He told you not to tell me, I s'pose?"

"I do not think I should if he had not."

"Why?"

"What he said is his secret. If you ask him I think he will tell you. He told you before."

"Was it about that?"

"All about that."

"Why do you look so pleased and happy?"

"I always do when I feel well, don't I?"

"And you feel well this morning?"

"I feel well this morning, and you know I would not if I was guilty of any thing."

"I know you would not. You are a good girl. And, Elsie, you are getting to be very much of a woman too, I see."

And Elsie felt that she was.



## CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH THE OLD MAN SAYS: “JOHN, THERE’S YOUR WIFE.”

“JOHN,” said the perplexed Mrs. Trask to him, when he came around the next evening, “I don’t know what to say to you.”

“Well, then, say something good and kind; for if you should blame me, and it should turn out to be wrong, as it would, you would be unhappy forever after.” He was in very good spirits.

“What if I should praise, when you ought to be blamed?”

“Well, I think it better to err from kindness than to blunder from cussedness, especially when I am the subject of the experiment.”

“Now I expect—I am quite certain—that you have been doing something that will lead to bad”—

“Oh, oh! Stop right there! Don’t finish any thing that is certain to go from bad to worse. What do you suspect?”

“Why, here you have been around, mooning about, melancholy as a newly-weaned calf, and here was Elsie silent and drooping as a sick kitten; and all at once she is as fresh and rosy as can be, and you are jubilant—fairly witty.”

“Don’t you wish something would happen to you? It must be something criminal, to make two sad ones happy—or at least cheerful.”



“Why do you come here when I am away?”

“Why are you away when I come here? That’s what I want to know.”

“Well, you knew I was away last night, and you came up on purpose because I was.”

“Yes, that helped, but that was not all the cause. Your absence is what they call a negative. That other thing, its opposite, — the positive, I believe, — must have had much more to do with it, I think.”

“Elsie was that, I suppose?”

“Well, I am quite positive that she had much to do with it. You see, sis, I wanted to know how it would seem to come here once and not find you here.”

“And you liked it so well that you’ll watch for another chance, I suppose?”

“Well, no, I think that will do.”

“Now, John, what did you say to her?”

“I said I had been a fool.”

“What was the use of saying that?”

“That was the starting-point.”

“Well, what did she say to that?”

“She agreed with me.”

“Yes, there could be no doubt about that. Well?”

“I began with being a fool, and grew fooler.”

“And will end with being fooler, I suppose. Will you answer me one question?”

“A dozen.”

“I don’t want to ask more than three or four.”

“Better rattle ’em all in now, while I feel like answering.”

“Well, to begin with, are you engaged?”

“Engaged! What do you mean?”

“You know very well. Now answer.”

“I am not, — we are not.”



"Very well."

"Yes, but it could be a good deal better."

"Does she love you?"

"Who? Elsie?"

"Of course, goosey."

"Ask her. It is her secret. She never told me. If she had I would not tell of it. I will tell you what she said about my love, if you want to know."

"Well, let us hear. It was something good, no doubt."

"She said it was like old Mother Rogers's cornstalk molasses, the less of it used the sweeter the things were. Ha! ha! ha! What do you think of that?"

"It was pretty true, though not complimentary."

"To my father's youngest son."

"Well, I don't see as I am making much headway."

"I don't think you are. The fact, sis, is, I didn't make much headway myself."

"Yet you are wonderfully well satisfied, and so is she. I never saw a little go so far."

"That shows how modest and unselfish we are. Who could have the heart to come between us, and try to make us miserable?"

"I don't know, I am sure. Seriously, what do you suppose your father will say?"

"John Trask, senior?"

"Yes."

"About what?"

"About this."

"This what?"

"Why, this between you and Elsie — goosey."

"Elsie Wilson?"

"Yes."

"What is there between us?"

"Sure enough!"



“Well, if you will tell what it is, I think I can guess pretty well what our worthy and patriotic parent will say.”

“Now, John, I ain’t a bit satisfied.”

“Nor I either. I wish you would call in Elsie and ask her. I want much to see her.”

“Now, John Trask” —

“John Trask, junior, if you please.”

“I am not agoin’ to have you hanging about my house courtin’ my hired girl.”

“That is precisely what she said she would not have. Now, what is a fellow to do? I shall do what I can; but with both of you against me, I sha’n’t make much headway. I shall have Jim on my side.”

“Jim! He’ll do a good deal for ye.”

“I’ve heard of his courting one woman, and I think he’d better do it over.”

“I wish he’d try it.”

“So do I. It would make some opening for me.”

“John, you are too bad. You know I wish you well,” vexed and teary.

“My dear sister,” approaching, and laying his arm respectfully and tenderly about her waist, “is there any thing in the world better, that you can wish an honest-hearted young man, than that he might win Elsie Wilson for his wife. Of all the girls you ever knew, have you ever known her superior, raised in the woods, without father or mother, as she was?”

“That is a serious question, John.”

“It is, and before God I will deal with it seriously and honestly.”

The kind-hearted woman was much impressed by his words and manner, and resolved from that moment to remain passive, only conducting herself with a watchful re-



gard toward the young girl, placed in her trying position, and leave results to others.

Elsie, however, conducted herself with a rare prudence. She met John, when he came, pleasantly; but never regarded him as there on her account. She never went out to walk or ride with him, nor did she in any way show that she had any claim on or expectation of him; nor did any one but Mrs. Trask suspect there was really any thing between them, and at times she was in doubt about it.

In the mean time John broke entirely with the Miller crew. He made a great quantity of maple sugar that spring, and had a lot of hands chopping and clearing and planting corn, sowing spring wheat, oats, &c.; and the spring ran into the summer, and about the middle of June his father arrived from the East.

He was a short, rather stumpy man, lame with the rheumatism, and walked with a cane, of a severe look but kindly, and he loved money with a miser’s passion. A man of slight culture, his life had been devoted to gaining money. He had made liberal advances to his children, and then intended they should take care of themselves. He had still quite a fortune for that day in his own hands, which he intended to retain, and which he loaned on mortgages where the titles and values were like the foundations of the globe. It was supposed he would bring a thousand or two for loans in Ohio, and his coming was an event. He was expected to make his home at Jim’s, where there were fewer children, and more room; and Jim, who had a thrifty turn, was not without expectations. He was apt to be on hand when the old gentleman was handling money, and had a way of picking up and holding on to small bills, sometimes to the senior’s annoyance.

Well, he came, took his trunk to Jim’s, had the best



room, and was at home. He took a fancy to Elsie at once. No old man could be so curmudgeonly as not to do that. She was so sweet, so modest, so full of gentle spirits, and had such handy, pretty woman's ways, and the bright color had such a way of coming into her cheeks. Then she was so neat and deft; and, without being in the least officious, she did so many things, and with such a will, for the lonely old man, that before a week was over she had quite won his heart. And when he had nothing else to do, which was most of the time, he would sit and watch Elsie. There could not be a pleasanter occupation. He noticed that she was low voiced, and every thing on the farm, from the horses to the cat, knew and loved her.

"Who is she?" he asked, on the next day after his arrival, of Jim's wife.

"She is our girl."

"One you have taken, adopted?"

"No, we picked her up."

"Picked 'er up, ha? Well, somebody else will be pickin' 'er away from you before long: such girls don't run long."

"She is our hired girl."

"Hired girl, eh? Well, I used to be a hired boy; and if I was a young man now I should offer her board and clothes for life, for whatever she might do."

"Well! if that ain't a pretty beginnin'!" said the young matron to herself.

It was a busy season, and the old man was more inclined to have the boys attend to their farm work than to him. He was going to stay all summer, and he was better pleased with their duty to the corn. It was the second hoeing, and a wet season; and John had shrewdness enough to know that Elsie, left to herself, would win her own way to the withered old heart.



On the third or fourth day the old man took it into his head that he wanted to go up to Chardon, to make an inquiry about a land title he talked of making a loan on. Jim was away, and had the steady horse in the corn-field. Whereupon Elsie harnessed the other into the light wagon, and offered to drive him, which the old gent was only too willing to accept, and off they went. At first he was a little uneasy. The horse was spirited; but the young woman’s hands were strong and firm, and she showed such a mastery of him, that he was not only quite at ease, but she won greatly on his good will and admiration.

On their way home they drove round by More’s, where they made a stop, and took supper, and so home in the cool of the day.

The next afternoon he wanted to go round and see John’s corn. He had not intended to go till Saturday; but he would take John and his corn by surprise, and so round they went about four, and the old man was charmed with the corn on the new rich bottom lands. They drove leisurely along by the field in the highway. John was at work at a little distance, with one or two men on a new fence, and the old man wanted to see him, and could not well go to him, and was too distant to call, nor did he see them. “Would Elsie mind going for him?” — “She would not mind going at all.” And he was charmed with the pretty color that flushed her face as she sprang from the carriage, and picked her way daintily over the rough ground. He never took his eyes from her.

John was very much surprised, as none of them saw her approach till she spoke “Mr. Trask!”

“Why, Elsie! Did you light down from the clouds? I believe you did.” What a glory her flushed face and bright eyes, her charming print dress and graceful form,



shed over the rough, stumpy, dark, and grimy new ground. He might well fancy that she flew there.

“No : I lit down from your brother’s buggy, where your father sits now, waiting to see you, and I came to call you.”

“Oh ! you did? Well, boys,” to the men, “finish this up. You see, I am taken !” with a laugh, as he turned and walked away with the girl.

“O Elsie ! I am more pleased than I can say.”

“He is real nice, I can tell you,” was her response.

“And he likes you?”

“I harnessed the horse, and took him to Chardon yesterday, and round to Mr. More’s, where we took supper,” was her reply to that question.

“Well said ! If that don’t beat me ! What does Jim’s wife say?”

“Nothing to me. You see, there is nobody else to do it for the poor, dear old man.”

“And you like to do it on my account, Elsie?”

“I should do it for any such old, helpless man, on my own account.”

“Yes, of course ; but don’t you think of me?”

“Well, I see you,” with an arch smile.

“How do I look?”

“You would be improved by washing your hands and face,” quite decidedly, with an arch smile.

“And putting on a jacket and coat?”

“I don’t know,” said the young girl, looking him over with a flush. She had never seen him stripped to shirt and pants before, and she had a woman’s eye and admiration for a handsome lithe form.

“I think you do very well as you are—to work, or look at.”

“Thank you.”



As they approached the buggy, the old man thought he had never seen a handsomer young pair, and he wondered “What on airth John was thinkin’ on.” I suspect that John’s mind was running in the same channel. After a few words, “John, it’s most night, you won’t do much more, anyway. Let us drive along round your place, an’ then you hop in, an’ go over to Jim’s with us. What do you say?” said the old man.

“Agreed.” Nothing could suit him so well.

“An’ what do you say, Miss Elsie?”

“I say nothing. I am only driver,” with her eyes down.

“Well, will you drive him back?”

“I only drive for you,” naively. “He can walk back, or take his own horse.”

“My horse is away in the pasture. May I ride over with you?”

“You will ride over with Mr. Trask, your father, like a good boy, and I shall drive.”

“Thank you, and now let me put you into the buggy.”

“Thank you, I will put myself in,” which she did.

“Well, she’s independent, anyway,” thought the old man, who felt that she was robbing John of what was his rightful due.

“Yes, all right, I remember. I will walk to the house and get my coat, and be out in a moment,” said the young man, hurrying away.

“I wonder what that means?” thought the old man. “What did John mean by ‘I remember’?”

Elsie drove along to the house, where, five minutes later, John came out quite spruce. Elsie arose, and made room for him in her own seat, and, as the two now filled it, she looked a little puzzled and colored. The old man was equal to the occasion, which embarrassed John a little.



“You will sit right down on John’s knees,” he said decidedly, “and not bear any of your heft on your feet. That is the place for a girl to sit, especially when the old man is along.”

“Thank you, father,” from John, with real gratitude ; and the young girl thus ordered seated herself lightly on John’s willing knees without a word, but with a burning face. The road along by John’s farm was new and stumpy, and the ground uneven ; and it required some skill, with slow driving, to guide the carriage with safety, and John rendered the poor child a real service when, with his right arm, he drew and held her to a firmer seat, until they gained a smooth road, where he forgot to remove his arm. Elsie scarcely spoke on the way home. On the smooth road, she let her eyes fall on the well-formed, strong, brown, manly hand which supported her, — the hand which had been offered her. She admired it very much. And she wondered if it found pleasure in resting there ; and she wondered if it was a real pleasure to John to support her on his knees, and on the whole, she rather thought it was. She thought he ought to remove the hand ; and then, just before they reached Jim’s, she gently inserted the tips of her own fingers between the brown thumb and finger, as if to remind him to remove it ; and they were very gently clasped and detained, and she could quite feel the thrill which her touch sent through the heart of her lover. She was grateful that Jim’s wife was not there to see her in John’s lap. The instant she pulled up at the gate, she sprang from the carriage, and surrendered the horse to Jim, who was out, and walked into the house.

John helped his father out, and as they stood a moment, —

“John !” said the old man solemnly.

“What, father?”

“There’s your wife.”



## CHAPTER VI.

## THE MISER.

JOHN, junior, had all the shrewdness of his father, with the advantages of a much better education. For a farmer's boy of that day, his advantages had been superior; and, though not especially intellectual, he was greatly in advance of those around him. So far as his father was concerned, he deemed it wisest to leave his and Elsie's case in her hands; and for himself he rather played off, seemed indifferent, and, when rallied by the old man, affected to think that his chances were small. The old gentleman once spoke to Jim's wife about it, who, while speaking in terms of commendation of Elsie, intimated that she had not thought of a match between the young people, which he regarded as strange. And so did she. "How are John and Elsie getting on?" asked Mrs. More of her sister-in-law. "Do you suppose there is any understanding between them?"

"Of course there is."

"Why, I thought you said that there had been nothing said between them."

"Well, they are deep. They understand without words. These boys and girls know more about these things at ten than you and I ever will."

"What will father say? He seemed completely taken with her when they were at our house."

"Law! men are all alike, let one on 'em see a pretty face! They are all fools about women, and an old



fool is the worst of all. John is a fool about her, Jim is fooler, and father is fooliest. We may as well give it up. If she ain't our sister-in-law, she'll be our step-mother. She's bound to come in. You ought to see the way she manages father. It is too funny for any thing in this world."

"Why, I never thought she was artful."

"No, she ain't. She don't seem to be aware of it, and in that is her art. One can't help liking her, and if I was a girl I should envy her."

"Well, I am sure I shall like her, if it suits father," was Mrs. More's resigned answer.

And so it ran on.

On the Saturday of the second week of the old gentleman's visit, he and Jim went to Chardon, where he closed up two loans, and took securities. They returned in the evening, and he was late in bed the next morning. About nine in the forenoon, Jim, his wife, the old gentleman, and the two older children, went off to church, and did not return till after four in the afternoon. Elsie remained at home with the baby, as he was still called. She afterward said that she was alone all day. John was expected there that afternoon or evening, but did not come, and the old man and Jim, as well as Jim's wife, several times remarked upon his absence, and it was afterward remembered that Elsie did not say a word about it, and it seemed to have been forgotten that she never did speak of John unless spoken to about him. The old gentleman on the next morning was pottering about in his room looking for some papers and notes. He had then put out all the money he brought with him to loan, as he told Jim. Indeed, his son supposed that he had no more with him, except for his personal expenses in the country and on his return. Such was not the fact, however. There was, or



ought to be, in his pocket-book, several one-hundred-dollar bills on an Albany bank. He went to his trunk on this Monday morning, and was surprised to find the handle of the key broken off, though the trunk was unlocked. He opened it, found his pocket-book, opened that, and sank down on the floor. The bills were gone, — all of them. With trembling fingers he ran the book through. There was not a dollar in it. He plunged his hands into his inside breast-pockets. Both were empty. He pulled out a small wallet in which was quite a sum in tens and twenties. The missing bills were not there. He grasped the rifled pocket-book in both hands, and tried to think. He could not. There was no use in thinking. The money had been stolen. He knew it was in that pocket-book on Saturday. He placed it in that trunk in the evening, and had not been to the trunk since, till that moment. He lifted up the contents of the trunk, and put it under every thing, on the bottom, and there he found it. The stem of the key had been broken at the handle, and a bit of wood substituted, like the handle of a gimlet. That was split off, and the pieces were found near the trunk, which was conclusive that some one had been there. The sudden death of a son or daughter would have greatly shocked the old man. The love of money lay embedded in his heart and soul deeper than the love of children. The loss of this money was a greater calamity to him. It paralyzed him. He sat in an agony of speechless woe, with great beads of perspiration starting on his brow, with his helpless hands nerveless at his sides, while groan after groan escaped him.

Elsie at that moment ran up the stairs to make his bed, and tidy up the room. She saw him sitting flat on the floor, an image of despair, moaning, "My money is stolen! My money is stolen!" She was frightened, and



turned away, unable to speak. Ere she recovered, Jim's wife came up, at sight of whom he cried in louder tones, "My money! Oh, my money!"

"What — what — what is it, father?" in alarm.

"My money is stolen! Somebody has stolen my money. Jim has got it. Where is Jim?"

At the first cry of his money, Elsie uttered an exclamation, and, rushing past Mrs. Trask, ran down stairs; and, when next seen, was trying to busy herself about her work, pallid and distraught.

Mrs. Trask rushed up to the old man.

"Your money stolen?" and then, picking up the wallet which in his perturbation he had dropped, "Oh, no, father! here it is."

"Not that! not that! I had five hundred dollars in here," holding up the pocket-book. "Five one-hundred-dollar bills on the Farmers' Bank of Albany. Jim has got it, the villain!"

"Hush! hush! How could he get it? He didn't know you had it. And then he was away with you all the time yesterday."

"He had time. He's always snoopin' around."

"Oh! it is here, father," helping him up. "There, sit down, and let us look."

And the first thing she found was the pieces of the wooden handle of the key; and, when these were explained to her, she trembled, and her heart sank.

"There has been somebody here," she said, "and it was not Jim. He knew how to lock and unlock your trunk, and did it for you when you first came here, don't you remember?"

"Yes. Oh, it wa'n't him!"

"Besides, he wouldn't steal from you, father. Let me look."



And she did look everywhere thoroughly ; and then she gave it up and sent for her husband, and he came in and renewed the hunt, and the thing was talked over by the three, and Elsie was hunted up. Mrs. Trask found her in the garden, affecting to be at work on a bed of young beets, and observed that she looked scared and troubled ; and she told her she was wanted up stairs. She arose, and followed her mistress up to the room, where the woman turned, and, showing her the severed parts of the key-handle, asked her if she knew what they were. She answered that they looked like Mr. Trask's key-handle, which she had seen a good many times. "I was here when you first came up," to Mrs. Trask, "and I heard your father say his money was stolen."

"Why did you run away?"

"I did not suppose I would be wanted here."

"Who was here yesterday while we were gone to meeting?" asked the woman.

"Who was here yesterday?" was the girl's response.

"Yes ; who was here while we were gone?"

"Let me think," was her answer.

"Yes, think. You had better."

She walked away to the window, turned back, and with a steady eye and firm voice said, "There was no one with me but the baby from the time you left until your return."

"Are you sure?"

"I have thought of it, and I was alone."

"Do you know father had his money stolen yesterday?"

"I heard him say it was stolen. He did not say when it was done."

"It was stolen yesterday," said the old man hoarsely, "and you stole it."

A silence of a minute, in which all eyes were on the



girl's face, which was blanched a little now. Her eyes dilated, her nostrils expanded, and her soft lips closed firmly.

"Why don't you answer?" said Mrs. Trask at length.

"Why don't I answer what he says? If I deny it, you won't believe me: if I don't, you will say I can't deny it. I think it as easy to lie as to steal." Very quietly this was said.

"Perhaps you know how easy both are," said Mrs. Trask in a hard way.

The girl started up, made a step toward the insulting woman. "I never did lie, I never did steal," she said firmly, and turned and walked away.

The old man sprang up. "Elsie! Elsie! For God's sake, come back! come back!"

She stepped within the room.

"Come here," he said in a softer voice. "If you'll give me back the money, nothing shall ever be said about it. You only took it for a joke. Just give it back, and nothing will be said about it, not even to John."

"John! You shall tell John, and see what he will say." This was spoken passionately.

"Elsie, I have always been your friend," said Jim, much distressed.

"I know you have, Mr. Trask," very gently.

"This is a serious business," he went on to say. "You must return the money, or—or we will have to send for a constable, and you will be taken to jail."

"Do you think I would steal, Mr. Trask? How should I know he had any money?"

"I did not think you would steal, Elsie," was his answer.

"You have changed your mind. There is the little room you have permitted me to sleep in, and in it are the



few things I could earn. Go and search it, take every thing," she said.

As she spoke she went into it, and took from a deal box-like chest her mother's Bible, and went down and out into the garden, where was a grape arbor; there she sat down on a rough seat.

A search was made, not only of her room and the few things in it, but of all the premises in and out about the house.

"Did you go away from the house yesterday while we were gone, Elsie?" asked Mrs. Trask, approaching her about two hours later.

"Why do you ask? You believe nothing I say. I will say nothing more about it."

About noon James rode over to John's, and came back about two with word that John went off suddenly to Cleveland the night before, saying he would be back that evening or the next morning. The three exchanged looks. This was significant.

"He has carried the money to Cleveland," said the old man. "They are both in it—both on 'em."

"Father, would you suspect John?" asked Mrs. Trask.

"She could git him to do any thing," cried the unreasoning man. "She could me. I tell you they're both in it," querulously.

And then Jim and his wife went out to Elsie. "Answer me one more question," said Mrs. Trask. "Was John here yesterday?"

"I told you no one was with me but baby," she answered, without looking at them.

Then there was a long discussion, after which Jim went down to Esquire Harris's and brought him up in his buggy, and they took him out to where the wretched girl still sat,



with her mother's little Bible in her hand, pale, but placid and tearless. The kind, stupid old man with his crutches made his way to her, and, after a two-hours' fruitless effort with her, in which he did the talking, in the presence of Jim and his wife, he returned to the house, prepared an affidavit, to which the elder Trask was sworn, charging Elsie Wilson with the larceny of the missing money, and just at sundown a constable came with a warrant and arrested her, telling her she was his prisoner.

"Am I to go to jail to-night?" she asked eagerly.

"Oh, no!"

"Where can I stay, then? Will you take me somewhere?"

"You will stay here to-night," answered the kind-hearted man. "Or you may go and stay with me, at my house."

"Oh, thank you! I will go with you, then. They say in here that I stole Mr. Trask's money—John Trask's father's money," she said, "and they won't let me stay here, and I don't want to."

"Elsie!" cried Mrs. Trask, "you know you can stay here. We want you should stay here."

"I don't want to stay here. May I go and get my sun-bonnet? That will be good enough."

"O my God! Mr. Roberts," to the constable, "bring her in here, for God's sake, and stay here with her if necessary," cried Mrs. Trask, in great distress.

"Leave her in my care: I will be responsible for her," said Jim, wiping his eyes.

"Would that be right?" asked Elsie of the constable.

"Perfectly right," he answered.

"Shall you come and take me to jail in the morning?"

"Not unless Esquire Harris orders me to."

"And what if I run away in the night?"

"You won't. I will come for you in the morning."



She seemed now to forget her repugnance to entering the house, but went in, much as an entire stranger would who was shy, and did not know the customs of the people of the house. She sat without a word, declined to talk with the old man, whose helpless childish grief for the loss of his money seemed to excite her surprise and contempt. When pressed to eat, she drank a bowl of milk, and later asked if they would permit her to take little Robbie up to her room with her, as was her custom; and when she received assent, she took him asleep from his crib, and carried him up to her room.

Late in the night, ere she retired, Mrs. Trask stole up to the poor child's room with a candle in her hand, and noiselessly approached the bedside. Elsie was sweetly sleeping. A warm flush was on her cheek. Her face was turned a little to that of Robbie, who slept on her arm, whose face her own resembled in its pure innocence. While she thus gazed, moved to tears by the sight, a little agitation stirred the girl's face, her lips moved, and there stole from them, "Indeed, indeed, John, I did not."

"I know you did not, you blessed innocence," said the stricken woman; "and may God bring some light out of this thick darkness."

In the morning Elsie was up early, washed and dressed her charge, and asked permission to aid about the house, where every thing was sad and silent, as if the family had been stricken by a death.

After breakfast Roberts came in, and asked if any thing had occurred, and, being told there had not, said to Elsie that they must go to Esquire Harris's. She put on her bonnet, had a small bundle of her girl's clothes ready, took her mother's Bible in her hand, kissed the children good-by, stepped out of the door, cast a last look around the yard, and went out to the wagon. Jim had his own



carriage at the gate, in which his wife and father were to go, while the children were left with the woman who had charge of the dairy. James came forward and helped Elsie into the buggy, which he entered and drove off, while Roberts went in the larger carriage.

Early as it was, a rumor of something strange had run over the township; and a hundred men and boys were gathered about in the yard and highway in front of the justice's house.

As the buggy drove up, Uncle Tom Hazen stepped forward and took the young girl from it in his arms as if she had been a little child. "You blessed orphant!" he said, with a tremulous voice. "We knows ye's innercent as an unborn lam', an' there sha'n't be a hair o' yer head harmed. I'll take keer o' ye."

"Thank you, thank you," said Elsie, struggling to her feet on the ground. She was immediately conducted into the presence of the court, where, in the suavest way imaginable, Uncle Tom announced that the defendant was ready. The court fidgeted, and seemed to wait, like Macawber, for something to turn up. As nothing did, he complied with Uncle Tom's repeated request — "To proceed to onct."

Poor old man Trask was sworn, and told the story as the reader has heard it.

Nothing could surpass the soft, sweet way in which Uncle Tom then talked the case up with him, unless it was his ingenuity, and the effectiveness with which it was done. He fully exposed the weak and inconclusive nature of the evidence. The old man put his pocket-book, in which he supposed the money to be, and of which nobody else knew a word, in his trunk at eight Saturday night. At eight Monday morning he could not find it in the pocket-book. On search it was not found anywhere.



The defendant, a child who knew nothing of the money, a son and his wife, all remained in the house that night and till nine the next morning, when they and the loser were absent till four, where all remained till the money was missed. On the discovery the loser accused his son of taking it, and accused John of it, just as positively as he did the poor child, all of which, at great pains and ingenuity, Uncle Tom brought out. The old man would not say that he believed she stole the money. Mrs. Trask's evidence did the most damage when she recounted the words and manner of Elsie when the loss was discovered. But Uncle Tom brought her around to the scene in the poor girl's chamber, of the sleeping faces of the children, equal in their innocence; and he even secured the sleeping girl's words of denial, at which the old man's voice broke, and the whole crowd burst into sobs, while Elsie sat with a serene, sweet face through it all, with her hands clasped round her mother's Bible. The book attracted her advocate's notice.

“What is this the child has in her hands, Mrs. Trask?” he asked.

“Her mother's Bible.”

“My God, gentlemen!” exclaimed the artful old man, with real, natural tears in his voice as well as in his eyes, “see the poor, innercent orphant bringin' here and clingin' to her dead mother's Bible, God's own eternal witness of her innercence.”

He arose to the full of his gigantic height as he uttered these words, threw up his arms, and raised his streaming eyes to the God to whom he appealed, and uttered the sentence with a natural power and eloquence seldom surpassed, and which elicited a burst of applause from the profoundly moved audience.

As nothing more was said or offered, the heavy moulded



Court hitched on his seat, cleared his throat, and, after some minutes, began to mumble something about the matter before him. How he would have come out finally, or what would judicially have followed, will never be known; for just as he was about to conclude, a commotion was made in the crowd about the open door, through which John Trask, jun., made his way. He rushed into the court, covered with dust and perspiration, and cried out, "Hold on, squire! Elsie Wilson did not steal that money! Let me be sworn."

At his appearance, Elsie arose from her seat, with a deadly pallor on cheek and lip, succeeded by a rush of carnation. As he finished his words, she exclaimed, —

"John! For Heaven's sake" —

And then, as if recalling herself, she sank down, covered her face with her hands, and, for the first time, burst into tears.

And the now tumultuous citizens of the State of Monson broke forth with rounds of applause.

When something like order was restored, Squire Harris announced that the prisoner was discharged from custody, when Uncle Tom took up the scarcely conscious girl, and carried her into the open air, where the rude natures of the untaught men and boys, under the touch of the common mother, hailed her and each other as of kin.

John the younger immediately came to her side, and clasped one of her hands in both of his in mute emotion.

"Miss Wilson," said her brave old defender, "my ruff shall shelter ye. You shall find porridge and hominy in our dish; an' hearts to love; an' han's to defend ye; an', till frins ye like better claims ye, I ax the privilege of perfectin' on ye."

"Thank you, thank you, Uncle Tom, for her and myself!" said John warmly. "I am her true friend, though



she has given me no right to act, or even speak, for her. I am sure my brother and his wife cannot mean to cast her off: if they do" —

"What, John? For God's sake, don't say more!" said Jim's wife, greatly moved.

"Father was distracted — hush! Let us all go home. — Mr. Hazen, we are all under the deepest obligation to you. Do you and John take Elsie in his buggy, and bring her home, where we will talk it all over. I am sure that will be the best way."

"Will you go, Elsie?" asked Uncle Tom. "I think it's better so."

"Just as you wish," she said; when, supported by Uncle Tom, with John on the other side, still retaining the dear hand, they conducted her to John's buggy, which Uncle Tom stepped into; and, taking the passive girl on his lap as he would any child, they were driven by John back to Jim's house, followed by Jim, with his wife and father.

The excited crowd lingeringly dispersed, and went away eagerly discussing the whole matter, and wondering what the final explanation would be.



## CHAPTER VII.

## WAIT TILL YE CAN MARRY IN THE SUNSHINE.

ON their arrival at home, the parties assembled in the family room, and it was noticeable that Elsie had somewhat recovered her usual spirits, though she seemed quite anxious for something connected with John, who looked angry, and was silent.

The old man was the most cast down. Jim was in jolly good spirits, while his wife was almost happy, and seemed concerned about Elsie.

"I understand," said John, "that Elsie says that there was no one here on Sunday, after the rest of you went to church, until you returned. That was not so."

All eyes were turned upon the young girl, who dropped her head, abashed.

"It is not for me to blame her for the statement; for I know it was made to save me, and to save the name of Trask, good or bad."

Elsie here raised her eyes with a steady look to John's face, who went on: —

"I was here that morning. (A sensation.) I went up stairs and into your room, father," turning to the old man. "I opened your trunk. If there was any money taken from your pocket-book, I did it."

A start from all, when Elsie arose and stepped up to John.

"O John! you did not take the money. Don't say you did: I will not believe you. Why did you not leave



it as I told it? Let them think I took it, if they will," in great distress.

"I will go to the penitentiary first. Think you — you, Elsie Wilson, would steal? Let father charge me with it. It seems he has accused us all, except Jim's wife. If he accuses you again, I will go into court, and swear I stole it. I'll repay the money in a year."

"O John! John!" cried the wretched old man. "Don't say another word. I don't care where the money is. I am glad it is you. If you have got it, keep it. I am most heart-broken. I didn't know as I loved money so much. I'm glad it's you. Lost or stolen, what matters it now?"

"It matters this," said John. "You accused this girl, on your oath: you swore you believed she had stolen your money — believed it. She, who would take upon her own innocent head the crime, would tell a lie to save me — save your son, your own name, my dead mother's boy, your wife's child, from the shame of robbing his own father! Do you hear? Do you comprehend, old man?"

"John! John!" cried Elsie. "He is your father, old and broken. Spare him."

"He spared none in his love for a few dollars. Curse the money!" in superb scorn.

"Yes, yes, curse it, John. I don't care for it any more. Keep it and curse it."

"He thinks you have got it, John," said Elsie sadly.

"I don't care what he thinks. He told me he had brought me my mother's little hymn-book," said John. "And that it was in his trunk. I told him I would come round and get it Sunday morning. I did not want to take it then. I wanted an excuse to come here" —

"I remember your saying that," said Mrs. Trask.

"When I came here, you and Jim had just driven



away, and were in sight, when I drove up to the gate. I ran in and had a word with Elsie here, and ran up-stairs to father's room. The key was in the lock. I supposed the trunk was locked; and I turned the key suddenly back, and with such force that the wooden handle split off, and I threw the pieces on the floor. I opened the trunk, found the hymn-book, took it, and " — hesitating, with a bitter smile — "I'll raise the money for you, father. Perhaps I spent it in Cleveland. Well, I thought of the broken key; I pulled it out of the lock, and laid it on the table."

"I found it there," said Mrs. Trask.

"And I bought a new key in Cleveland for you, father. I can replace so much," said the youth, taking a new key out of his pocket.

"Wal, wal," said the old man, not yet half redeemed from the grievous sin of covetousness and suspicion, "where is the money, anyway? You've got it among ye, and you are savin' each other from the consequences," he said querulously.

"Mr. Trask," said Uncle Tom, addressing the old man impressively, "I don't envy ye yer money, I do envy ye these children. Don't ye see? can't ye see? Your cusein' on 'em o' stealin' yer money which ye lost, mebbe; mebbe ye never had non'. Somebody else has pilfered it. They hain't got it, and yer cusein' 'em on it, and each on 'em is tryin' to take it on 'emself to save 'tother. Can't ye see it, ye blind old beetle, or can't ye comprehend such ginerosity? It doos beat all on airth I ever seed or hear tell on! — It doos, sure as yer born, boys and gals," turning to the others with watery eyes.

"You are right, Mr. Hazen. It is wonderful and beautiful," said Mrs. Trask, wiping her eyes, and going to Elsie, and kissing her warmly, who returned it.



“Uncle Tom is right every time,” said Jim, whose eyes were running over.

“I ought to say,” continued John, “that when I came down stairs I showed the hymn-book to Elsie, and told her I had broken father’s key.”

“And why didn’t you tell me of it, Elsie, when I came home from meetin’?” asked the old man.

“I — I did not like to tell about John’s coming here,” with a little color; “and the next morning, when you discovered the loss of your money, I was afraid you might think he — he had taken it.”

“Well, when I accused you?”

“I’d rather you would think I stole it than that he did — a good deal.”

“You might have been put in jail, and sent to the penitentiary.”

“I expected to be.”

“And would you ha’ done that for John — to save my son?”

“More than that — if need be,” dropping her eyes and voice.

“An’ can ye forgive a weak ole man, who loved his money mor’n his children, for accusin’ ye of stealin’ on it?”

“I am sorry you love the money so. You are John’s father, and I like you very much.”

“An’ so you like me on John’s account? Well, will you forgive me?”

“Oh, yes! gladly!”

“Kiss me, then.”

Which she did, while tears dropped from the old man’s eyes.

“One thing more. Will ye be my darter — John’s wife?”



“He must ask me that,” rosy red, and dropping her face.

“I did ask her, father, last winter, after I had used her as badly as you have, and she forgave me as she has you, though she would not kiss me, as she has you — I don’t like that. And she said if I behaved myself for a year I might ask that question again.”

“Oh! that was the way of it, was it? I knew there was something in it,” said Jim’s wife.

“And has he behaved since then?” asked the old man.

“Beautifully.”

“And shall you compel him to wait the full year before he asks?”

“I don’t know. These strange things have happened. It seems to me a year since yesterday morning,” naively.

“There, John” —

But John did not need his father’s prompting. He sprang to her side, with tears in his eyes, and silently held out his hand, as on that winter night, with an averted face; and, rosy from veiled bosom to bare brow, Elsie put the coveted hand within it, which the happy youth bent over and kissed, when Jim’s wife clasped her in her arms, and kissed her effusively, calling her sister.

“My dear sister! You will be my dearest sister. I never for one instant believed that story.”

“An’ ye know I did not,” said Uncle Tom, approaching, around whose neck she threw her arms, and kissed his cheek, and then she kissed the children and hugged Robbie.

“All but me,” said John, who stood with happy tears in his eyes.

She approached him with burning cheeks, hesitated, then stepped to his side, lifted her face, with her eyes still



on the floor, and tendered her ripe lips for his kiss. One arm circled her waist, and the other hand met and clasped with the hand around her, and she was drawn gently and tenderly to his bosom, while a tremor ran through his frame. With a half fear, profound reverence, and passionate love, he bent his head and placed his lips, as full and red as her own, to hers, while murmured blessings fell from the lips of the happy witnesses.

The lovers then turned to the father.

“Is my blessing of worth to you?” he asked humbly.

“Give it us, father: we shall prize it dearly,” said Elsie.

They bent, and the old man arose much affected; and, laying his hands on their heads, “Bless ye! bless ye both! and God help and bless us all, especially me,” he said impressively.

“Amen,” responded Uncle Tom, with a twinkle in his still watery eye.

“And now,” said the old man to Elsie, “when shall it be? You know I must go home this fall.”

“When this money is found, or the mystery is cleared up, and so no shadow rests on us, and none on it — then I will tell you.”

“That is right and fair,” said Uncle Tom. “Better wait till ye can marry in the sunshine.”



## CHAPTER VIII.

## A LAWYER'S LITTLE STORY.

WHAT a delicious evening that was to John, to sit apart with Elsie, by themselves, and be left alone by the seniors, when he found that she was more courageous in their presence than when with him alone. She was so shy and modest and conscientious. But he remembered the time when she sprang from the sleigh, and was timid as well as respectful, and thoughtful too, for an accepted lover, so young as he was, and to whom lover's bliss was so strange. He remembered the great strain, the loss of food and rest, to which the dear girl had been subjected, and early dismissed himself for the night; and then he hurried out to see the light in her little room, which was soon extinguished, and in his happy unrest he wandered through a part of the June night under the stars.

Old man Trask awoke the next morning, peevish, unsettled, and dissatisfied. The fangs of a sordid passion were still in the fossil remains of what he called his heart. Who or whatever robbed it of its idol, by fraud, stealth, or force, became the object of his rancorous hatred. What is so incurable as suspicion, unless it may be jealousy? He could not disabuse his mind of the idea of a complicity of John and Elsie with his loss. Then there was the mystery, the doubt, in which the loss was involved. Could he know certainly that these two had it, even that would be a source of comparative relief. The loss of the money in itself was a sorer trial to him than would have



been the knowledge that his son had robbed him of it. This he was compelled to admit to himself, and shuddered at the thought. He had fancied himself a Christian, but religion was a mere sentiment, not a rule, and brought him no resignation, light, or rest; and, comparing his conduct with that of Uncle Tom Hazen, an admitted heathen, he felt that he was at a disadvantage, except that God would care for his own.

Something of all this escaped from him the next morning, when it became apparent at once that peace and light were banished from the household beyond the power of Elsie to charm them back. She felt, as the cold eyes of the old man turned on her, that his suspicions of her had returned. John had intended to go back to his farm and hired men, instead of which he resolved to devote himself to the solution of the mystery in which the money had disappeared. He went at once to Uncle Tom's, took him in his buggy, and, driving to Chardon, they came directly to me. I had seen John before, but had not made his acquaintance. I was much taken with him. His person and address were good; and he told his story clearly, directly, and simply.

It excited me so much that the fact attracted the attention of Uncle Tom. I had not heard a word of the matter; but its romance, the singular features of the disappearance of the money, were such as to arrest the mind of a lawyer, who had, unfortunately for himself, attracted attention as a criminal prosecutor. And then a funny thing had occurred to me, which I did not care to speak of to them, though it helped to incite my fancy in connection with the statement made by them. When they got through, I screwed down my mouth, put a severe aspect to my brow, and paced my two rooms with an air of intense thought. I presume no man ever was so profound



as I looked to be at that time. My whole effort, however, was to control my eagerness to rush upon a catastrophe that had formed itself within one minute from the statement of the loss and description of the bills. When I had apparently matured a complex theory of the case, I intimated that I thought I could see something like a ray of light in the darkness surrounding the transaction, and asked one or two questions quite necessary to my real notions of the case, and said that it was important to see the old man, and ask him one or two things, for, if I was right, he probably could alone explain the transaction. I wanted to know whether he was at the law-office of O. P. Brown on the last Saturday, who were there with him, and every thing which occurred there, saying, "I think he must have forgotten something. Now, you all be at Jim's at four this afternooon — all of you, and, Uncle Tom, I specially want your presence. I will be there at that time; and I feel quite certain, that, amongst us all, we will find daylight in it, and somebody will be surprised, and all will be pleased. Unless I am badly mistaken, it will end like a play.

Uncle Tom was all curiosity.

"Don't ask me now, Uncle Tom. I will be prepared to tell you every thing in my mind at four this afternoon precisely."

And then they went away.

As soon as they were off the platform in front of the office, I shut the door, leaped over a big stove, ran into the back-room, and performed various pantomimic motions expressive of intense gratification.

Soon after, I walked gravely out at the front-door, and went down across the street to Asa Larned and Otis Bond's livery-stable, and ordered my pet horse and buggy for half-past three. I then walked out south to Judge



Avery's, and found Carrie in the front-yard among her flowers.

Talk of maidens' forms! I wish you could have seen her then. But she don't belong to this history. She saw me coming, but affected not to, or even to hear the gate as I slammed it. She was very busy just then inhaling the fragrance from a blossoming rose-tree.

"Carrie!"

"Oh, how you frightened me!" springing up.

"Yes, I know I did. You had laid yourself out to be frightened. It seems to produce a rush of blood to the face."

"It often affects me that way," naively.

"Especially when you have had notice."

"You see, Mr. Impudence, I borrowed from these roses: arn't they beauties?"

"You come by the color naturally, Miss Avery, by a law of consanguinity."

"Is there a compliment or a sarcasm hidden under that sanguinary word, Mr. Councillor?"

"I compliment the roses, Miss Avery."

"You don't say what you think of my roses."

"Oh, your roses! They are your cousins, and so well enough. I hadn't seen them, really. Why should I? They are well enough for roses. Who cares for roses?"

"I do."

"So do I, then: they are beauties, exquisite, transcendent!"

"That will do. Poor things! They are not a jury to be stupefied with long words."

"Miss Avery?"

"Sir?" demurely.

"Do you wish to take a ride this P.M.?"

"Girls do not have wishes. If they do, they do not express them to young gentlemen."



“ Oh ! that is it, is it ? ”

“ That is just it. ”

“ Miss Avery, ” — hat in hand, — “ permit me to place a horse and carriage at your disposal this afternoon, with yours devotedly as attendant and driver, ” very humbly and respectfully.

“ Thank you. As I have nothing else on earth to do, and time is heavy, I will avail myself of your kindness, perhaps. ”

“ Your ‘ perhaps ’ lays me under many obligations. Permit me to name the hour as three, perhaps. ”

“ Perhaps I will not keep you waiting more than thirty minutes, ” laughing.

“ May I solicit a rose from your tree ? ”

“ Certainly — you may solicit. I believe you are called a solicitor or something, and it would be quite professional ; and then they are well enough as roses, Mr. Solicitor. Do you always win your cases when you solicit ? ”

“ No. The gift would give it value, ” I said, with a little pathos in my voice. “ I hope to be more fortunate when I solicit a flower again. At three — till when, adieu. ”

She was not prepared for the turn I made, and may have looked at her fully-blown tree with the thought, that, after all, one might as well have hung on a pin from the lapel of my coat as to fade on its stem. As for me, I managed to go away with a sense of injury, sometimes dear to a lover’s heart — or mood.

At sharp half-past three I was in front of the yellow cottage with a carriage. She did not keep me a minute. As she came out, she made a little semi-circuit around by the beautiful rose-tree, and, selecting an exquisite half-opened flower, plucked it and came toward me, with her dark eyes swimming in liquid light.



“Is that the rose you refused me?”

“This is the rose I give you,” and fastened it deftly to my coat, and making a snowy rose-tinted cup of her hand she affected to press it to its place and admonish it to remain like a well-conducted rose, when she just lifted her eyes to mine.

“Thanks, dearest,” and we drove leisurely away.

We went down Water Street on the Cleveland road, and turned south-west. On the way I told the young lady the story of John and Elsie so far as I knew it. The romance enlisted her sympathies at once. She had seen Elsie, and praised her beauty, as she did that of other women, without a thought of herself. Old John Trask's miserliness shocked her, and she wondered how I expected to unravel the mystery surrounding the loss of the money. I answered, “That will depend,” and turned her attention to the lovers involved in it.

We were there on time. Miss Avery knew the Trasks, and was herself quite widely known in all the region about Chardon.

I found old man Trask depressed and querulous. When I was introduced to him, he only raised his eyes, saying, “What do you s'pose you know about this?”

“That will appear in good time.” And I went on to ask him two or three questions, which he answered shortly, and without raising his eyes. He was at O. P. Brown's office on Saturday as late as three in the afternoon. He got up about eight on Sunday morning. Any fool knew his money was not stolen that morning before he was up.

I turned away from him to Uncle Tom, Mrs. Trask, and Jim, while Miss Avery, Elsie, and John, sat near him in a little group, and said, — talking at the old man all the time, — “A funny thing happened to me early last Sunday morning, which I will tell you of.



“Brown had to leave that morning for Randolph, to visit his sick brother.”

“Yes, he told me he’s going,” growled the old man.

“And he wanted to start very early. He did go a little after six. How the deuce he got up in time for that is more of a mystery to me than the loss of this money is now.”

“Hired a man to sit up all night an’ wake ’im per’aps,” said Jim.

“One man couldn’t wake him alone, — but no matter, up he was, and came over to Larned’s and waked me up. It was so extraordinary that I noted the time, and it was a little past five o’clock. I got up” —

“Alone?” demanded Miss Avery.

“Alone, Miss Avery.”

“That was a morning of wonders,” she replied.

I glanced down at my beautiful rose, and went on. “Brown was a good deal excited.”

“He must have been, to induce you to rise at that hour,” she added.

I deemed it wise to disregard the last sarcasm, and went on.

“Brown asked me to go with him to his office, which I did. Not a word was said on the way. We went up the stairs, he unlocked the door, pushed it open, stepped back, and told me to look in. The office, as you know, is over Jude Converse’s store, with two windows in front some twelve or fourteen feet from the ground, which Brown said had been open all night. Then he said, ‘I came here about half an hour ago. You are my friend, and, by the repeated blunders of the people, the prosecuting attorney. I want you should take charge of the office and all there is in it. I leave the key in your hands, and must go to my sick mother.’ And he went off, leaving me there.



“There were a number of loose papers scattered all over the floor, as if blown off from the table by the wind during the night. The table stood in front of one window, and there was nothing on it when I saw it.”

“I remember—I remember,” said the old man, interrupting me, “that I sat by that table.”

“You do? Well, if you are good at recalling, I will help you to remember a more important fact. On the floor, among the papers strewn about,” resuming my story, “were several bank-bills—several bank-bills, strewn around with the papers blown from the table.” A pause, to note the effect, which was great, especially on old man Trask.

“I stood looking them over, and endeavored to think of some clew as to how and why they came there. They were not Brown’s; could not well have been thrown in at the window; would not have been, unless counterfeit. I picked up one and examined it. It certainly was genuine. I gathered them all up; and, as I thought, they were all genuine. They must have been left there by mistake. Some reckless man, who don’t care about money, laid them on that table, and went off, and has never thought of them since—ha, Uncle Trask!” turning to man, who was very much interested. The idea of finding the old a quantity of genuine bank-bills lying around loose on the floor was more absorbing to him than would have been a visible flight of angels through the sky.

“A man goin’ off and not thinkin’ on his money is a likely story,” he said contemptuously.

“It is, ha? Well, old man, we will see about that in a minute,” turning now to him: “there were just five of the bills. How many did you lose?”

“Five. What—what”—

“Hold on, old man! each of these bills was a hundred-dollar bill.”



“My God! you don’t” —

“I do. Some of you hold him. Well, all of these bills are on the Farmers’ Bank of Albany.”

“Oh, oh, oh!” springing up, notwithstanding his rheumatism.

“You left them on Brown’s table among the papers, never thought of them, unlikely as the story is, and here they are,” holding them out in my hand to him.

Every one sprang to his feet and gathered around me, while the old man, with his head bent forward, and his keen, sharp eyes peering up through his shaggy brows, looked at me for half a minute, his face ashen, and his whole form quivering. Suddenly he struck his brow, and, with a little cry, sank back into his seat, while Elsie sprang forward, threw herself on her knees at my feet, raised her clasped hands and beautiful eyes to heaven, and cried, “Thank God! Oh, thank and bless God!” And Carrie stood, with lips apart, with her great, black, melancholy eyes flashing with wonder, and melting with joy. I didn’t notice the others.

There was a half-minute’s silence, when, starting forward, the old man cried in anguish, “I see it all! I see it! It was just as I told you at first. It was that pesky Jim’s doin’s; all his fault. You see, he’s always gittin’ money of me, when he knows I has any. Wal, I had five hundred dollars more’n he knew on. When I was in Brown’s I took my money out; there was fifteen hundred dollars egzactly; I counted off five of the bills, an’ jest then I heard Jim a comin’ in, an’ I shoved them are five bills under a newspaper on the table, an’ never thought on’t agin, and never should. O God! I ain’t fit to do nothin’; and all this — all this comes o’ my forgitfulness. Wal, wal, God help me! I forgot.”

“An’ it was money ye forgot!” said Uncle Tom, with his small, blue eyes twinkling.



“Wal, wal, children,” turning to Elsie and John, “can you forgive me?”

“As easy as you forgot your money,” cried the happy Elsie, springing up, and throwing her arms about his neck, and kissing his shrivelled lips; while John, with tears in his eyes, clasped one of the shaking, shrunken, miserly old hands in his two warm, firm, generous ones.

“Well, Mr. Trask,” said I, holding out the bills to him, “here is your money. I tender it in presence of these witnesses.”

“I won’t touch it. It has done evil enough. Give it to Elsie. Give it to Elsie. She has earned it; give it to her.”

“Yis, yis,” cried Uncle Tom, “the money belongs to her.”

“Give it to her, father,” said Jim’s wife eagerly, in which Jim joined.

“Give it to Elsie; don’t you hear?” cried the old one to me.

“Mr. Trask, you give it to her,” said I, proffering him the bills again.

He took them in a shaking hand. “Here, Elsie, dear child, will you take ’em from a poor, forgetful, sinful, old man?”

“Do you mean it, father?”

“Take ’em, for God’s sake!” said the old man in distress.

She took them.

“There!” he cried, much relieved. “Thank God, that is off my soul!” and turning to me, “Young man, I’ve heard of you before. I want to know more on ye. You shall have fifty” —

“Not a cent, not a cent. I am more than paid. I took charge of this for Brown, and have done what he



would, — restored the money to the owner the moment I found out who he was.”

And then I had to tell what I had thought about the money, in the mean time, and explained that I had expected that some owner would turn up for it; that, had Brown told me of the transaction of Saturday afternoon, I should have had the clew at once.

“It is all for the best,” said the old man. “God intended it for the best, no doubt, for all our good.”

“The ole hunks would ‘a’ liked it better if he could ‘a’ got the same amount o’ good for less money,” said Uncle Tom in an aside to me.

To which I said, “ahem,” too intent on Elsie for Uncle Tom’s keen observation.

She had taken her seat, and sat running the bills, new, handsome, and crisp, over in her hands, admiring the neat engravings with childish delight.

“They are all just alike, ain’t they? And is each of these worth a hundred dollars, John?”

“A round hundred. If you were to take these to the bank, it would give you a hundred silver dollars for each,” he answered.

“Would it? I never saw a hundred-dollar bill before, and there are five of them. Five hundred dollars. Is that a good deal of money, John?”

“Yes, for these times in Monson, it is a good deal of money.”

“Does it make us rich?”

“Us rich? It makes you rich, for a girl.”

“What can I do with it all?”

“I’ll tell you,” said the old man, now much interested in her talk. “Buy yourself a handsome weddin’ dress an’ an outfit. The cloud is gone away now.”

“Yes, I remember. John can trust me, can’t you, John?” with just a glance at him.



“Indeed, I can.”

“Will you keep the money for me, Mr. Trask?” to the old man.

“I keep it! I dare not touch it agin’; would not for the world,” said the old man decidedly.

“John, will you keep it for me?” appealing to him.

“Can you trust me with so much money?”

“I am trusting you with every thing.”

What a blessed, happy time it was!—one of those hours in human lives when heart and soul break through all, and love and trust come with refreshing to the sordid, famished bosoms of many.

With glad, bright words, we took leave, Carrie and I, with our two hearts not then needing much refreshing. We went out alone into the warm and early summer gloaming. Ah, me! the memory of that homeward ride,—

“Mid falling dew,  
While glowed the heavens with the last steps of day.”

Should this page meet her eye, still lustrous under her splendid wealth of snowy hair, would it awaken a tender recollection of a far-away, sweet June twilight and evening?

Monson was long ago admitted into the Union, and boasts a population as thrifty and refined as any of her older sisters. Her beautiful forests, and the cabins of her early settlers built in their midst, disappeared together; and Uncle Tom, and the whole of that band, have departed.

“Each in his narrow cell forever laid,  
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.”

Elsie had her bridal home on the banks of that beautiful creek, which her memory still invests with the lingering charm of romance. Tender maidens, who have never



before heard her name, will thank me for this little legend, and look with interest upon all the places her presence made beautiful, and ask questions of her life and lovely ways which those familiar with her later history will gladly answer.

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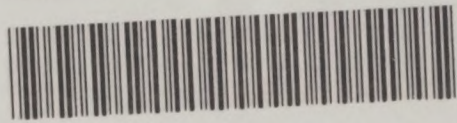
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